

CLOUDS

Speaking Characters

STREPSIADES: an elderly rustic Athenian

PHEIDIPPIDES: his son

SLAVE: of STREPSIADES

STUDENT^A: a pupil of SOKRATES' school

SOKRATES: Athenian intellectual, head of the Thinking Institute

CHORUS (24 dancers/singers): of Cloud deities

LEADER: of the CHORUS

MORAL: personification of just and traditionally 'stronger'
arguments

IMMORAL: personification of unjust and therefore supposedly
'weaker' arguments

CREDITOR^A: from whom STREPSIADES borrowed money for his
son's horses

CREDITOR^B: ditto

STUDENT^B: another member of SOKRATES' school

Silent Characters

STUDENTS: various pupils of the Thinking Institute

WITNESS: accompanying CREDITOR^A

SLAVES: further members of STREPSIADES' household

[*The stage building has two doors in its façade: next to one of them (A) stands a herm (see note on 1478); next to the other (B), which will turn out to be SOKRATES' school, there is a large round pot (note on 1473). Door A belongs to STREPSIADES' house, but at the outset the space in front of it has to be imagined as inside his bedroom. STREPSIADES and PHEIDIPPIDES are discovered (after the removal of screens?) lying in bed, the son fast asleep while the father tosses and turns. The two side entrances (eisodoi) connect the onstage locations with other parts of Athens.*]

STREPSIADES [*loudly*]. Oh blast! Oh blast!
 Zeus, king of the gods, how I hate the dead of night.
 The time feels endless. Will daylight never arrive?
 Yet I'm sure I heard a cock crow ages ago.
 The slaves are snoring. They never used to do.
 Damnation on you, war! Not least because
 We've reached the point where I can't even punish my slaves.*
 And of course this splendid young fellow lying next to me here
 Never wakes in the night—oh no, he just farts away
 With five blankets, no less, to bury his head beneath. 10
 Okay, I'll try the same: cover up and snore.

[*He pulls up a blanket, tries briefly to sleep, but soon re-emerges with frustration.*]

I just can't sleep! What a miserable life, being bitten
 By the debts I've incurred for keeping a stable of horses
 For this son of mine. He lets his hair grow long*
 And his life's an obsession with horses and chariot-racing*—
 He even *dreams* of horses. Meanwhile I'm distraught
 As I watch the moon reach the twentieth day of the month.*
 All that interest mounting up! [*Sits up and shouts.*]

Hoy, slave, a lamp!

And bring me out my accounts. I want to read
 How many my creditors are and work out the interest. 20

[*A SLAVE appears from door A, carrying a lamp and a set of wax tablets. He stands and holds the lamp while the old man starts to read.*]

What's this first debt here? Twelve minas to Pasiás.*
 Twelve minas to *Pasiás*? But what was that for?

Of course, when I bought that dashing racer.* Oh fool!
 [Sarcastically] I'd rather have lost an eye—*dashed* out with
 a stone!

[As STREPSIADES continues to examine his accounts, PHEIDIPPIDES
 starts talking animatedly in his sleep.]

PHEIDIPPIDES. Philon, you're a cheat! Just stick to your
 chariot lane!

STREPSIADES. There you are, the very affliction that's blighted
 my life.

He can't even sleep without dreaming equestrian dreams.

PHEIDIPPIDES. How many laps do the war-carts drive in this race?*

STREPSIADES. Well I'm the one you're *driving* crazy, that's sure!

[Gloomily] 'What burden next was mine'—after Pasiás'
 loan?*

30

[Reading] Three minas, chariot base and wheels: Ameinias.

PHEIDIPPIDES [*still dreaming*]. Get my horse rolled clean in the
 dust, then take him home.*

STREPSIADES. Well, mate, it's *me* you've taken to the cleaners!

I've got several convictions for debt, and now other lenders

Say they'll seize my goods.*

PHEIDIPPIDES [*waking*]. What's wrong with you now, then, father?

Why spend the whole night fretting and tossing and turning?

STREPSIADES. There's a thing in my bed that bites me—a debt
 enforcer!*

PHEIDIPPIDES. For goodness' sake, just allow me to get some sleep.

STREPSIADES. Go on then, carry on sleeping. But mark my words:

These debts will all be on *your* head one day.

40

[PHEIDIPPIDES wraps himself up once more under his blankets. His
 father groans.]

What calamity!

How I wish that matchmaker woman had been wiped out,*

41b

The one who urged me on to marry your mother.

[Nostalgically] I used to enjoy such a lovely *rustic* life:

I wallowed in seedy abundance, not a care in the world,

My existence teeming with bees and sheep and olives.

Then I married a niece of Megakles, son of Megakles!*

Yes, me a rustic and her a true city girl,

So haughty, so classy—*Koisyra* from head to toe.*
 On my wedding day, when I got into bed beside her,
 I smelt quite strongly of wine, dried figs, and wool,
 While *she* smelt of perfume, saffron, sexy kisses,
 Conspicuous consumption, and women's cults!*
 She wasn't exactly lazy; she worked the loom hard.
 But I'd take this cloak of mine to show her and say:
 'You're using too much wool, my spendthrift wife.'

50

SLAVE. There's no more oil to keep the lamp alight.

STREPSIADES. Oh no! But why did you light such a thirsty lamp?

Come here, you need a thrashing.

SLAVE.

But what have I done?

STREPSIADES. You inserted one of those big fat wicks, that's what!

[*The SLAVE slips away through door A. STREPSIADES recomposes himself.*]

Then, when this son of ours right here was born,
 The son of me and my high-and-mighty wife,
 We started to wrangle at once about his *name*.
 She wanted a name with a horsey-hippo ring:
 Xanthippos, Chairippos, Kallippides, or the like.
 I wanted Pheidonides, his grandad's name.*
 Well we argued away for a while, till in the end
 We compromised and agreed—'Pheidippides'.
 His mother would pick up the child and pamper him rotten:
 'When you're big and drive your chariot up the Akropolis,*
 Like Megakles did, in a flowing robe . . .' *I'd* counter:
 'No, wait till you're herding goats on the rocky hillside,
 The way your father does, in a farmer's jerkin . . .'
 He never paid any attention to what I said.
 He just left my property ailing from horse-disease.
 So I've spent the whole night pondering how to escape.
 I can think of just one way but it's rather special;
 If only my son will agree, it'll be my salvation.
 But the first thing I need is to rouse him out of his sleep.
 Now, what's the *nicest* way to do it? Let's see.
 Pheidippides, Pheidippididdles—

60

70

80

PHEIDIPPIDES [*stirring*]. What now?

STREPSIADES. Give your father a kiss and clasp my hand in yours.

PHEIDIPPIDES [*sitting up*]. Okay. What's wrong?

STREPSIADES.

Please tell me you

really love me.

PHEIDIPPIDES. I swear by Poseidon Hippios I do!*

STREPSIADES. No, please, not *him*: don't swear by the god of horses.

He's the very god who's left my life in ruins!

But if your love for me is true and heartfelt,

Please do what I ask, my child.

PHEIDIPPIDES.

Well *what* do you want?

STREPSIADES. I want you to change your way of life at once

And to go and learn the things I tell you to.

PHEIDIPPIDES. What things do you mean?

90

STREPSIADES.

Will you promise?

PHEIDIPPIDES.

All

right, I'll promise,

I swear by Dionysos!

STREPSIADES.

Then look over here.

[*Father and son get up and leave their beds, which are now removed by SLAVES. The setting implicitly shifts: the part of the stage building with door B is referred to by StrepsiaDES in what follows as though it were a nearby house observed from the street.*]

Do you see that little house there, the one with that door?

PHEIDIPPIDES. Yes I see it. But what's the point you're making, father?

STREPSIADES [*with naive awe*]. Clever *souls* live here: it's their

Thinking Institute!*

Inside this building are men who say the sky

Is not what it seems—no, it's really a baking-lid

Which curves all round us here, so we're the charcoal.*

These people will teach anyone who pays them a fee

How to argue and win, regardless of right and wrong.

PHEIDIPPIDES. Who *are* these people?

100

STREPSIADES.

I'm not quite sure of their

name.

But they're deep-thought-cogitators of highest standing.

PHEIDIPPIDES. Yuck! A load of swine, you mean. They're charlatans,

That pale-faced, shoeless crowd you're referring to—
Like wretched Sokrates and Chairephon!*

STREPSIADES. Shh, shh! Keep quiet! Enough of such childish talk.

If you care at all how your father feeds the family,
Agree to join these men and give up your horses.

PHEIDIPPIDES. Not a chance, by Dionysos! No, not if you gave me
Every one of the pheasants Leogoras rears for himself.*

STREPSIADES. I beg you, please, since you know how dearly
I love you.

110

Go and be their pupil.

PHEIDIPPIDES [*puzzled*]. But *what* do you want me to learn?

STREPSIADES. It's said they possess a pair of arguments:

The stronger, whatever that is, and also the weaker.*

They say that one of this pair, the weaker, that is,
Can always win a debate with its immoral claims!

So if you learn this immoral way of debating,

Of all the debts I've incurred because of *you*

I'd never repay a single person one obol!*

PHEIDIPPIDES. I'm not prepared to do it. I'd be ashamed

To face the cavalry men with a scoured complexion.*

120

STREPSIADES. I swear, then, by Demeter I won't be paying

For any more food for you or your fancy horses.*

You can go and rot—you're barred from my house for good!

PHEIDIPPIDES. So what? Uncle Megakles won't allow me to live

Without horses. I'm off. I couldn't care less about *you*. [*Exits
through door A.*]

STREPSIADES. Well I've no intention of letting this knock me down.

[*Approaching door B*] I'll pray to the gods then become a student
myself

By going to join the Thinking Institute.

[*Hesitating*] Then again, I'm old, forgetful, and rather slow:

Can I really learn their hair-splitting, quibbling speech?

130

I'm determined to do it. What's keeping me hanging back here?

I'll bang on the door right now. [*Knocks and shouts.*] Hello there!

Slave!*

[*A pale-faced figure emerges from door B.*]

STUDENT^A. To hell with this banging! Who's knocking like this at
the door?

STREPSIADES. It's StrepsiaDES, son of Pheidon—deme Kikynna.*

STUDENT^A. And an idiot too, by Zeus! You kicked the door

So hard and without any trace of self-reflection

You *aborted* a thought my mind had just discovered!*

STREPSIADES [*naively*]. I'm terribly sorry—I live in the country,
you see.

But tell me, please, what it was that was just aborted.

STUDENT^A [*gravely*]. It's a ritual secret that none but the students
may know. 140

STREPSIADES. It's safe to tell me then: that's why I'm here,

To join the Thinking Institute as a student.

STUDENT^A. I'll tell you—[*confidentially*] but treat it all as a sacred
mystery.

Just the other day, Sokrates asked Chairephon

How many times its foot-length a flea can jump.*

A flea had bitten the eyebrow of Chairephon

Before jumping across, you see, to Sokrates' head.

STREPSIADES [*absorbed*]. Well how did he measure it then?

STUDENT^A. Oh, *so* astutely.

He melted some wax, then picked up the flea with his hand

And dipped both its feet straight into the puddle of wax:.* 150

When it cooled, there they were—Persian slippers, no less, for
the flea!*

He took them off and used them to measure the space.

STREPSIADES. Zeus, king of the gods, such delicate mental powers!

STUDENT^A. Would you like to hear *another* extraordinary thought
Of Sokrates'?

STREPSIADES. What kind? Yes please, do tell me.

STUDENT^A. He was asked by Chairephon, of the deme of
Sphetos,*

Which view he held on the humming sound of gnats:

Do they sing through the mouth, or is it the rump that they use?

STREPSIADES. And what was Sokrates' answer about the gnat?

STUDENT^A. He said that the gnat's intestine's extremely
narrow 160

And through this delicate passage the air is forced

Until it makes its way to the animal's rump:

That's where the hollow space at the end of the gut,

The anus that is, releases a forceful blast.

STREPSIADES. A *trumpet* then for an anus, that's what gnats have!

[*Naively*] He's a happy man who knows their innards so well.
He'd find it easy to get acquitted in court
If he knows a gnat's intestines inside out.

STUDENT^A. Two days ago Sokrates lost a big idea
Because of a lizard.

170

STREPSIADES. A lizard? I'd like to hear that.

STUDENT^A. He was puzzling over the curving paths of
the moon

Across the heavens and gawping up at the sky

When down from the roof in the dark came—a gecko's shit.

STREPSIADES [*laughing*]. I love it! A gecko that shitted on
Sokrates!

STUDENT^A. Just yesterday we had no food for dinner.

STREPSIADES. I see. What scheme did he use to find you grain?

STUDENT^A. He sprinkled a layer of ash across the table

Then bent a spit to serve as compasses—

Then stole a cloak from the gym to pay for the food!*

STREPSIADES [*animated*]. Then why do we think so highly of
ancient Thales!*

180

Open up, open up the Thinking Institute,

Show me Sokrates himself without delay.

I'm longing to be his student. Please open the door.

[STUDENT^A *opens door B, through which emerges not SOKRATES, as anticipated, but a group of STUDENTS: engaged in various 'scientific' activities, they take up positions in a kind of tableau.* STREPSIADES walks round among them.*]

By Herakles, what on earth are these creatures I see?

STUDENT^A. Why be so amazed? What d'you think these people
look like?

STREPSIADES. Like the captured men from Pylos, the
Lakonian lot!*

But why is this group over here staring down at the ground?

STUDENT^A. They're seeking the things under ground.*

STREPSIADES. Ah, looking
for onions!

No need to continue to worry yourselves about that.

I know where to find some great big lovely ones. [*They ignore him.*]

190

And what is this group doing here, the ones bent double?

STUDENT^A. Taking Erebos probes down under 'Tartaros' realm.*

STREPSIADES [*examining their buttocks*]. Then why is their anus gazing right up at the sky?

STUDENT^A. It's learning to do astronomy all on its own.

[*Gesturing to group*] Come on inside, in case the master finds you.*

STREPSIADES. Not yet, not yet. Let them stay a moment longer.

I'd like to share with them a problem of mine.

STUDENT^A. But they're not allowed in the open air like this

Or to hang around outdoors any length of time.

[*The STUDENTS go back inside, leaving behind on the ground various pieces of equipment which STREPSIADES proceeds to examine.*]

STREPSIADES. In the name of the gods, what's all this stuff? Please tell me.

200

STUDENT^A. Well this is astronomy here.

STREPSIADES. And what about this?

STUDENT^A. That's geometry.

STREPSIADES. What's the *use* of a thing like that?

STUDENT^A. To measure the earth.

STREPSIADES. For cleruchies, you mean?*

STUDENT^A. No no, the *whole* of the earth.

STREPSIADES. I like what you're saying!

An ingenious way of helping the people at large.*

STUDENT^A [*picking up papyrus*]. And this is a map of the whole wide world, you see?*

This is Athens right here.

STREPSIADES [*peering*]. Surely not, I don't believe you:

I can't see *jurors* sitting in court on benches!*

STUDENT^A. I assure you, look, this is Attika's territory here.

STREPSIADES. Well where are my fellow Kikynnian demesmen then?*

210

STUDENT^A [*pointing*]. Somewhere round here. And there's Eubolia, you see,*

This long flat strip laid out along the coast.

STREPSIADES. I remember we flattened them once with
Perikles' help!*

But what about Sparta? Where is it?

STUDENT^A. It's *here*, of course.

STREPSIADES. That's far too close to us! Please change your minds
And move it as far away as you possibly can.

STUDENT^A. You can't just move it!

STREPSIADES. You'll regret it, by Zeus, if you
don't.

*[At this point a figure whose mask has particularly large, bulging eyes
appears over the roof of the stage building suspended from the theatrical
'crane' (mêchanê) in a kind of swing.]*

STREPSIADES. Oh, who's this then, this man who's swinging
there?

STUDENT^A. It's the master!

220

STREPSIADES. The master?

STUDENT^A. Yes, Sokrates.

STREPSIADES. *Sokrates!*

Please shout and summon him down on my behalf.

STUDENT^A. You can call him yourself. I'm far too busy for now.

[Exits through door B.]

STREPSIADES *[excited]*. O Sokrates!

[Ingratiating] O Sokratiddles!

SOKRATES *[portentously]*. Whose mortal call is that?

STREPSIADES. Tell me first what exactly you're doing. I'd love
to know.

SOKRATES. Air-walking and spinning my thoughts around the sun.*

STREPSIADES. You mean you look down on the gods from up on
your perch?

Why not stay here on the ground?

SOKRATES. I'd never be able

To investigate all higher matters correctly*

Without elevating my intellect and thought

And mixing my delicate mind with the kindred air.

230

If I studied the things above from down on the ground

I would never have made discoveries, since the earth

Draws down by force the moisture of our thoughts.*

[Banally] The phenomenon's just the same with watercress.

STREPSIADES [*baffled*]. You what!

Our thought draws moisture into watercress? [SOKRATES
ignores him.]

But please come down to see me, o Sokratiddles.

I need you to teach me the things I've come to learn.

SOKRATES. And *what* would that be?

STREPSIADES. I want to learn to *argue*.

I've so many debts, and creditors wild with rage.

240

They're plundering all I've got and seizing my goods.*

SOKRATES. But how did you fail to *notice* your debts were
mounting?

STREPSIADES. A consuming disease—of horses!—afflicted
my mind.

Please teach me one of those arguments of yours,

The one that doesn't pay back. And whatever the fee

You charge, I swear by the gods that I'll pay it in full!

SOKRATES. The gods! Which ones will you swear by? We *have*
no gods

In the currency of our speech.

STREPSIADES. Then what do you swear by?

[*Joking*] Not *iron* coinage, the way Byzantion does?*

SOKRATES. Would you like to know in clear and rigorous
terms

250

The truth about the gods—

STREPSIADES. By Zeus, if I may!

SOKRATES. And to speak, yes face to face, with the Clouds
themselves,

Our own divinities?

STREPSIADES. Yes, I certainly would!

[*By this stage SOKRATES has been lowered to the ground; the crane swings
back out of sight. The objects used in the following lines are taken from
those earlier left behind by the STUDENTS.*]

SOKRATES. Sit down then here on the side of this holy couch.*

STREPSIADES. Right, there, I'm seated.

SOKRATES. Now place upon your head
This wreath.

STREPSIADES. A *wreath*! Why? Crikey, Sokrates,
Don't sacrifice me the way that Athamas was!*

SOKRATES. But these are the ritual acts we have to perform
With our new initiates [*starts sprinkling him with flour*].

STREPSIADES. What's the
gain for me?

SOKRATES. You'll become an old hand at speaking—a *floury*
talker!*

260

But please keep still.
STREPSIADES. By Zeus, you're not half right.
If I'm sprinkled all over, I'll soon be a heap of flour!

[SOKRATES *now intones like a priest, in recitative rhythms.*]

SOKRATES. Hold sacred silence now, old man, and hearken to my
prayers.

[*Gesturing upwards*] O lord and master, measureless Air, who hold
the earth up high!*

O radiant Aither! And goddess Clouds, awesome wielders of
thunder and lightning!

Rise up aloft, o mistresses, appear to me—the *thinker*!

STREPSIADES. No, wait—not yet. Let me wrap myself up. I'm
afraid of getting drenched!

What a fool I was to leave the house without bringing my dog-
skin cap.

SOKRATES. Come to us, venerable Clouds, exhibit yourselves for
this man here.

If now you rest on sacred, snow-capped peaks of mount
Olympos,

270

Or plan the sacred dance of Nymphs in father Ocean's gardens,
Or if in vessels of gold you draw up moisture from the Nile,
Or hover above the Maiotian lake or the snowy peak of Mimas—
Receive this sacrifice, enjoy our rites, and heed our prayer.*

[*Part or all of the CHORUS of Clouds now appears on the roof of the stage
building.* STREPSIADES and SOKRATES can hear their song but not yet
see them.*]

[PARODOS: 275–477]

CHORUS. Ever-floating Clouds, *Strophe*
Let us rise aloft, on clear display in our dewy glistening nature,
From deep-echoing waters of father Ocean*
To lofty mountains' pinnacles

Thick-grown with trees, our vantage-point 280
 To see conspicuous hill-tops in the distance
 Above the sacred land of irrigated crops
 And to hear the numinous rivers' roaring sounds
 And the booming roar of the sea.
 There the undimmed eye of Aither fills with rays
 Of brilliantly dazzling light.
 Come, let us shed the rainy cloud-mass
 From our immortal form and gaze upon
 The earth with our far-seeing eyes. 290

SOKRATES. O Clouds of majesty immense, you heard my call, it's clear!

[To STREPSIADES] Did you hear their voices and how their thunder bellowed with godly power?

STREPSIADES. Oh yes I did, o venerable Clouds, and would like to echo with farts

The sound of the thunder! That's how very much I'm trembling with fear right now!

And if it's allowed, and even if not, I'm starting in fact to shit!

SOKRATES. Don't make crude jokes or fool around like those wretched comic poets.

Keep sacred silence. Our gods are stirring themselves in song again.

CHORUS. Rain-bearing maidens, *Antistrophe*

Let us go to Pallas' lustrous country, to see where stalwart men 300
 Abound in Kekrops' lovely land.*

Where awe of secret rites abides,

Where the home in which the mysteries are housed

Is opened up in sacred ritual acts.*

The heavenly gods receive gifts there as well,

High-roofed temples and glorious statues,

Sacred processions for the blessed ones,

Garlanded sacrifices and feasts for the gods

At every season of the year, 310

Including springtime's Dionysiac joy

When mellifluous choruses compete

And the pipes' deep-resonant notes resound.*

[The CHORUS members now disappear from the roof of the stage building. They will start gradually to move into view again from line 323 onwards, but this time from an eisodos, until they occupy the orchêstra behind and around the characters.]

STREPSIADES. By Zeus, please tell me, Sokrates, who *are* these women I hear,
The ones whose awesome voices those were. Are they heroines from the past?

SOKRATES. Not at all. They're heavenly Clouds, great gods for people of leisure like me.
It's they from whom our intelligence comes, our debating techniques, and our wits,
Our portentous tricks, our circumlocutions, knock-down arguments, clinching retorts.

STREPSIADES [*excited*]. That must be why my soul, now it's heard their voices, starts to take wing

And desires to master subtle words, make vacuous talk about vapour,

320

Rebut every judgement with views of my own and contradict everyone else!

If you know how to make it happen, I want to behold them face to face.

SOKRATES [*gesturing*]. Look here towards Mount Parnes then.*

I can see them floating down

In tranquil silence.

STREPSIADES. Where? Show me where?

SOKRATES. They're approaching
in massed formation

Through the wooded glades. Look here, from the sides.

STREPSIADES [*disorientated*]. What on
earth are you talking about?

There's nothing to see.

SOKRATES. Through the entrance there.*

STREPSIADES. Ah *now* I can
just about see them.

SOKRATES. They're staring you in the face, unless you've got pumpkins in your eyes!

STREPSIADES. There they are, by Zeus! O venerable ones! Now they're filling the place completely.

SOKRATES. Did you really not know or acknowledge before that these Clouds are goddesses true?

STREPSIADES. I had no idea! I used to think they were mist and moisture and steam.

330

SOKRATES. You don't know then that they keep alive great hordes of *clever* people:

Purveyors of prophecy, medical experts, long-haired
signet-ring-wearers,

Composers of intricate dithyramb lyrics, and cheats with their
heads in the clouds.

Layabouts like these they keep alive for treating the Clouds as
their Muses.*

STREPSIADES. So *that's* why they wrote 'from moist clouds flash
zigzagging bolts of light',
And 'cloudy locks of hundred-headed Typhos', 'gale-blast storms',
And 'airy-moisty squalls', and 'crooked-taloned, air-swimming
birds',
And 'floods of rain from saturated clouds'—and in return
They wolfed down gourmet mullet and slices of finest breast of
thrush!*

SOKRATES [*pointing to* CHORUS]. And all because
of *these*, of course.

340

STREPSIADES. But tell me, what's the reason
They look exactly like mortal women, if they're really and truly
clouds?

[*Pointing*] Those ones up there don't look like women.

SOKRATES. Well what do
you think they are?

STREPSIADES. I'm not quite sure. They look like pieces of wool that
lie stretched out

And not like women, by Zeus! Not even remotely. [*Pointing at*
CHORUS] *These* have noses!

SOKRATES. Come on then, answer whatever I ask.

STREPSIADES. Fire away then,
ask what you like.

SOKRATES. Have you ever looked up and seen in the sky a cloud
resembling a centaur

Or perhaps a leopard, a wolf, or a bull?

STREPSIADES.

Yes of course, but why does

it matter?

SOKRATES. The Clouds can become whatever they want. So suppose they spot down here

A long-haired brute of the shaggy brigade, like the son of
Xenophantos:

In order to mock his crazy looks they assume the shape of
centaurs.*

350

STREPSIADES. And what if they spot a person who filches the
public funds, like Simon?*

SOKRATES. Their appearance reflects his nature at once: they
take on the shape of wolves!

STREPSIADES. That's why when they saw Kleonymos yesterday,
that shield-discarder,*

They thought he was such a colossal coward they turned them-
selves into deer!

SOKRATES. And when just now they saw Kleisthenes, that's why
they turned into women!*

STREPSIADES [*to* CHORUS]. All hail then, goddesses great! Come
now, vouchsafe your voice to me

In a crack of sound that will fill the heavens, o queens almighty
above!

CHORUS.* Greetings, old man of ancient stock, who seeks out
cultured words.

[*To* SOKRATES] And you too, priest of subtle drivel, do tell us
what you want:

There's no other sage with head in the clouds whose requests
we'd deign to answer—

360

Well, only Prodikos that's to say, on account of his wisdom and
knowledge,*

While *you* we respect for that swaggering walk and the way you
twist your eyes,

And your life of discomfort without any shoes and that solemn
face in our honour.*

STREPSIADES. O goddess Earth, what sounds they make! So sacred,
solemn, portentous!*

SOKRATES. Indeed, for these are the only gods. The rest are
a load of old rubbish.

STREPSIADES. But please explain, in the name of Earth: is
Olympian Zeus not a god?

SOKRATES. What, *Zeus*! Please stop that twaddle. He doesn't
exist.

STREPSIADES. But what do you mean?

Who makes it rain, if it isn't Zeus? Explain that first
to me.

SOKRATES [*pointing*]. *They* do, of course! I'll teach you how with
some very impressive signs.

Now tell me this: have you ever seen rain that falls from
a cloudless sky?

370

Yet if it was Zeus, he ought to make rain when these Clouds
are nowhere around.

STREPSIADES. By Apollo, you've found a perfect way of making
your argument fit.

And yet I really used to think it was Zeus who pissed through
a sieve.*

But tell me who makes the thunder then, the sort that gives me
the jitters.

SOKRATES. It's *these* who thunder by rolling round.

STREPSIADES. But how,
audacious thinker?

SOKRATES. It's when they're soaked to the limit with water and
compelled to move about

While sagging low all teeming with rain, and then in this heavy
state

They collide with one another and make those sounds of
cracking and rumbling.

STREPSIADES. But *who* is it then who compels them to move, well
isn't it Zeus himself?

SOKRATES. Not at all! It's the swirl of the atmosphere.* 380

STREPSIADES. The swirl?

It was lost on me

That Zeus just doesn't exist but instead it's Swirl that rules the
world.

But you haven't yet taught me exactly how the rumble and
thunder occurs.

SOKRATES. Are you deaf? I told you it's when the clouds are
brimming full of water

Then bang into each other and rumble because they're so compressed.

STREPSIADES. But how do I know I can trust what you say?

SOKRATES. I'll explain from you yourself.

Have you ever been full of broth at the Panathenaia then felt your stomach*

Start churning round and a sudden roar goes whooshing through your insides?

STREPSIADES. By Apollo, not half! And straight away there's a furious churned up feeling

And just like thunder the lovely broth keeps rumbling in ominous tones.

It starts quite low, 'pah-pah pah-pah', then grows into 'pa-pa-pa-paaaah'!

By the time I *shit*, it's outright thunder, 'pa-pa-pa-PAAAAH', like them.

SOKRATES. Well think what a noisy fart is produced by this tiny stomach of yours.

But the air up there is endless, so how could thunder not be so loud?*

You must admit that the sounds themselves are remarkably like one another.*

STREPSIADES. But tell me now the source of thunderbolts that gleam with fire

And turn to cinders the people they strike, though a lucky few are just singed.

It's clear that *Zeus* wields thunderbolts against all perjurers here.

SOKRATES. What a fool you are! You reek of the age of Kronos, you blethering fool!*

If Zeus strikes perjurers, why has he never sent Simon up in flames,

And why not Kleonymos, why not Theoros, perjurers through and through?*

Instead he strikes his very own temple, and 'Sounion, headland of Athens',*

And very tall oaks—but *why* do that? No oak tree perjures itself!

STREPSIADES. I can't answer that. You seem to be right. But what is a thunderbolt then?

SOKRATES. Well, when a dry wind blows up on high and is locked
 inside these clouds,
 It fills them with air just like a bladder and then with pure
 compulsion
 Makes it burst back out with violent force on account of its great
 compression,
 And because of the rushing, whirring motion the air ignites
 itself.*

STREPSIADES. By Zeus, I had this same experience once at the
 Diasia.*
 I was roasting an animal's stomach for all my kinsmen but failed
 to slit it.
 It had filled with air and all of a sudden it burst right down the
 middle
 And squirted shit in both my eyes and left my face all burnt. 410

[*The CHORUS-LEADER now approaches STREPSIADES.*]

LEADER. O mortal man who's set your heart upon our greatest
 wisdom,
 The people of Athens and all of Greece will deem you to be
 happy
 If your memory's good and your intellect too and you're tough
 enough to endure
 All manner of mental exercise without flagging or getting
 sore feet
 And you don't much mind feeling cold or depend on a meal at the
 start of the day
 And can do without wine and athletic pursuits and the rest of
 a life of folly
 And you think, as the smartest people do, that the most important
 thing
 Is to win every battle in life through action, through scheming,
 through use of your tongue!

STREPSIADES. As far as toughness of mind's concerned, or worries
 that trouble my sleep, 420
 Or leading a stingy life with a stomach that's fed on no more than
 sour herbs,
 You can count on me, don't worry—I'll take all the blows and the
 poundings you like!

SOKRATES. Will you undertake to recognize no other gods than we do,

So the Chaos of space, the Clouds, and Tongue—no others but just these three?*

STREPSIADES. I won't speak a word to the rest of the gods, even if I meet them in person!

I won't sacrifice or pour libations or burn incense on their altars.

LEADER. Be candid then and tell us what you'd like from us.

You'll obtain it

If you show us honour and awe, and strive to be always a person who's *smart*.

STREPSIADES. O goddesses great, there's just one tiny thing I want from you:

To be the finest speaker in all of Greece by a million miles! 430

LEADER. You'll have this gift for sure from us. From now for all the future

There'll be no politician who wins more Assembly votes than you.

STREPSIADES. It's not Assembly proposals I want to make. That's not my wish.

I want to twist the law in court and evade my creditors' grasp.

LEADER. You'll receive, then, what you crave. This desire of yours is certainly modest.

You must place yourself with confidence in the care of our servants here.

STREPSIADES. I'll put my trust in you and do what you say. I've no real choice,

It's all because of those thoroughbred horses and a marriage that's worn me out.*

[*Excited*] Now let these people do what they want.

This body of mine I'll put in their hands: 440

They can flog me, starve me, subject me to thirst,

Make me shrivel and shiver and flay my skin,

Provided I'm free from my debts for good

And come to be thought by everyone else

As brash, slick-talking, audacious, assertive,

Revolting to deal with, deviser of falsehoods,

A spinner of words, an old hand round the courts,

A quoter, a yapper, a fox and a wriggler,

A schemer, duplicitous, oily and phoney,

A rogue and disgusting, a twister and cheat, 450
 A lip-smacking creep!*

If these are the names I'm called everywhere,
 Then let these people do what they must,
 And if they want
 By Demeter they're free to serve me up
 As sausage for all these thinkers!

[*The whole CHORUS bursts into song and STREPSIADES responds in song:*
 457-75.]

CHORUS. What spirited pride is his!
 No shrinking back, all's ready for action.

[*To STREPSIADES*] Be sure of this:
 If you learn from me, then sky-high glory 460/1
 Will be yours among all mortals.

STREPSIADES. What will happen to me?

CHORUS. For ever with me
 You'll lead the most enviable life
 Of the whole human race.

STREPSIADES. Is it really the case that
 I'll see this happen?

CHORUS. You'll actually find
 Great crowds at your doors,
 Sitting there day and night,
 Wanting to consult you 470
 And engage in discussion
 About problems and lawsuits
 With large sums at stake—
 All well worth your thought
 When they seek your advice!*

LEADER (*to SOKRATES*). You must now take steps to prepare
 the old man for the things you intend to teach him.
 Make sure you activate his mind and test his mental powers.

[*The CHORUS now moves back to the edge of the orchêstra; the characters return to spoken dialogue.*]

SOKRATES. Right then, disclose the type of person you are.
 Once I know what this is, I'll use new mechanisms
 To bring to bear and break your defences down.* 480

STREPSIADES [*alarmed*]. What d'you mean? It sounds like a plan for siege warfare!

SOKRATES. Not at all but I need to ask you a few short questions.
Is your memory good?

STREPSIADES. It depends, I've got two kinds.
If I'm owed some money, my memory couldn't be better.
But if I'm the miserable debtor, it couldn't be worse.

SOKRATES. Do you have any natural talent for using words?

STREPSIADES. No talent for words at all—but I'm good at *stealing*!

SOKRATES. Well how are you going to learn?

STREPSIADES. Don't worry, with ease.

SOKRATES. Let's see. If I toss you a clever conundrum to solve
About higher matters, then try to grasp it at once. 490

STREPSIADES. Do you mean I should gnaw it the way a dog does
a bone?

SOKRATES. This man's a fool and a philistine all in one!

I suspect, old man, that a thrashing is what you need.

Let's see. What d'you do when you're hit?

STREPSIADES [*feebly*]. I accept the blows,

Then I wait a moment and start to shout for a witness.

Then I leave it a little while longer and bring a charge.*

SOKRATES. Well now, take off your cloak.

STREPSIADES. Have I done something
wrong?

SOKRATES. It's just our custom to wear few clothes inside.

[*He starts a surreptitious body search under STREPSIADES' cloak.*]

STREPSIADES [*resisting*]. I'm not coming to look for stolen goods,
you know.*

SOKRATES. Take it *off*! Stop all this chatter. 500

STREPSIADES. Just tell me this:

If I try my best and am eager to learn your teachings,

Which student of yours will I turn out to resemble?

SOKRATES. You'll be no different from Chairephon, that's who.*

STREPSIADES. That's *not* what I wanted, the prospect of being
half-dead!

SOKRATES [*removing the cloak*]. Just stop this babble and follow me
here inside

Without further delay.

STREPSIADES [*anxiously*]. But I need to protect myself
 By holding a cake to placate any dangerous forces.
 It's as scary as going inside Trophonios' cave!*

SOKRATES. Come straight inside. Stop hanging around at the door.

[*Both exit through door B.*]

[PARABASIS: 510–626]

CHORUS. Farewell to you 510
 For the manly courage you're showing!

May all good fortune follow
 This man. Despite the fact
 Of advancing years
 His nature's assuming
 A youthful lustre
 As he practises wisdom!

LEADER [*stepping forward to address the audience*].

Spectators, I'm going to speak my mind to you candidly
 And truthfully, in the name of Dionysos who reared me!*

As surely as I wish to win the prize and be thought a clever
 poet, 520

It was because I believed you *sophisticated* spectators
 And took this comedy to be the cleverest of all my plays
 That I deemed it right for you to be the first to savour a work
 That caused me so much effort. Yet I left the theatre defeated*
 By vulgar rivals, an ignominious fate! That's why I blame you,
 You 'clever' spectators, for all the trouble this caused me.
 Even so, I'll never willingly betray the sophisticated among you.
 Ever since in this theatre some men it's a pleasure to mention
 Gave such acclaim to two figures (one bashful, the other an
 arsehole)

And I, like an unmarried girl not yet allowed to give birth, 530
 Had to expose my baby and another girl took it for herself,
 And *you* were the ones who reared and trained it so proudly*—
 Since then, I've had a firm pledge of your intelligent judgement.
 Well, just like the famous Elektra, this present comedy
 Came on a quest in search of such clever spectators:
 She'll recognize, if she ever sees it, the lock of her brother's hair!*

And consider how bashful this play of mine is. To begin with,
 It didn't come before you with a leather appendage dangling
 With a big red tip, the thickest sort, to make the small boys
 laugh.*

It didn't crack jokes about bald men, nor drag in obscene
 dances, 540
 It didn't produce an old man who spoke his lines while using
 a stick

To strike somebody and stop you noticing the lousy humour.
 It didn't rush on stage waving torches and shrieking 'alarm,
 alarm!'

Instead it's come before you relying on its own poetic merits.
 And although that's the sort of poet I am, I don't give myself airs
 and graces,

Nor do I try to cheat you by staging the same stuff again and
 again,

But I always display my cleverness by bringing you new forms of
 humour

No two of which are the same—and they're all so sophisticated.
 I'm the one who, when Kleon was at his height, struck him hard
 in the belly

Yet couldn't bring myself to jump back on him once I'd knocked
 him flat.* 550

But these other poets, ever since they got hold of Hyperbolos,
 Won't leave the poor sod alone: they keep trampling him and his
 mother.*

Eupolis started it, dragging his character Marikas on stage
 And making a right botched job of reworking my own play
Knights.

All for the sake of an obscene dance he added a drunk old woman:
 But Phrynichos did this long ago in the scene with the hungry
 sea-monster.

Then Hermippos wrote another play making fun of Hyperbolos*
 And by now all the rest are grinding out plays making fun of
 Hyperbolos

As well as copying an eel-fishing simile all my own invention.*
 So, whoever laughs at such poets should take no pleasure in
 work of *mine*. 560

But if it's me and my comic inventions which give you delight,

You'll always be thought to have very high standards of judgement.

High and mighty among the gods, *Strophe*
 Zeus their ruler: he's the first I summon
 In all his greatness to witness my dance.
 Second the trident's powerful keeper,*
 Who makes the earth and briny sea
 Heave with his raw power.
 I also call our father of great renown,
 Aither the most majestic, life-giver for all. 570
 And finally the celestial charioteer*
 Who bathes in rays of unequalled light
 The whole earth's surface—divinity great
 Among gods and mortals.

LEADER. You clever spectators, concentrate and give us your full attention please.
 We feel that we've been wronged by you and wish to make our grievance heard.
 Of all divinities we're the ones who lend the city the maximum help
 Yet we're the only ones to whom no sacrifice or libation comes,
 Even though it's us who keep you safe. Suppose you send an expedition
 That makes no sense, we let you know with thunder loud or pouring rain.* 580
 Or when the Paphlagonian tanner, that god-forsaken man himself,
 Received your votes to serve as general, we drew our eyebrows sharply down
 And made our anger plain to all: 'the lightning and the thunder cracked'.*
 The moon was seen to wander from its usual paths, the sun as well
 Extinguished its lamp and drew itself abruptly into self-concealment:
 It threatened its light would never more shine on you if Kleon became a general.
 Yet you went ahead and elected him. They say this city's afflicted with

A habit of taking rash decisions, but nonetheless the gods
 themselves
 Redeem your blunders and turn things round to make them
 always work out fine.
 To show that's true in the present case too is easy for us to dem-
 onstrate. 590
 If Kleon the cormorant glutton's found guilty of taking bribes
 and embezzlement too,
 And if you fasten him into the stocks and tighten his neck as
 much as you can,*
 There'll be a return to the good old days and you'll find your
 blunders have been reversed.
 The city's affairs will turn out fine, its future fortunes will be
 assured.

CHORUS. All hail, in turn, Lord Phoibos, *Antistrophe*
 Delian god, who occupies Kynthos,*
 The island's high-horned rock.
 You too, blessed deity whose golden dwelling*
 Is on Ephesos, where the Lydian girls
 Worship you unstintingly. 600
 You too, our own local goddess,
 Charioteer of the aegis, Athena of the Akropolis.*
 And you who occupy Parnassos'
 Rock and gleam amid pine-wood torches,
 Conspicuous among the bacchants of Delphi,
 Reveller Dionysos!

LEADER. We were just preparing to start our journey and come
 down here to visit this place
 When the moon encountered us and asked us to bring you all
 a message from her.
 She told us first to greet the Athenian people and all their allies
 as well.
 But she also said she's angry with you. She claims you've made
 her suffer a lot 610
 Despite the manifest ways in which she helps the lives of one
 and all.
 For a start her light saves money for you, at least a drachma on
 torches per month,

So on leaving the house when evening comes you all look round
and are able to say:

‘No need to purchase a torch, my slave, since the light of the
Moon is shining so bright’.

She helps you in other ways too, she insists, but you’ve let your
calendar get out of joint.

You break the regular pattern of days and throw everything into
total confusion.*

And then it’s the Moon herself at whom the rest of the gods keep
making their threats

When they turn up for dinner and find it’s not there and have to
go home on an empty stomach

Because their festivals haven’t occurred on the days when the
calendar states they should.

At the times assigned for sacrifice, you’re torturing slaves and
holding trials.*

620

But at *other* times, when we the gods decide to abstain from
eating food

Because of our grief for fallen heroes, the likes of Memnon or
Sarpedon,*

You pour libations in festive mirth. And that’s the reason
Hyperbolos

When allotted to sacred office this year was punished by us the
gods above:

His garland was blown right off his head! That way he’ll learn his
lesson for good,

To obey the dictates of the Moon in the way she orders the
days of life.*

[*The CHORUS moves back to the sides of the orchêstra. SOKRATES now
re-emerges from door B, gesturing with frustration as he does so.*]

SOKRATES. In the name of Respiration, of Chaos, and Air!*

I’ve never in all my life met a bumpkin like this,
So helpless in every respect, so crass and forgetful!

When you try to teach him the merest little trifles

630

He forgets them in no time at all. But nevertheless

I’ll ask him to come here outside back into the daylight.

[*Calling at door*] Hoy, Strepsiades! Come out, and bring
your bed.

[STREPSIADES emerges from door B, struggling with the same couch/bed he was made to sit on at 254 ff. He is now scantily clad, without the cloak and shoes he wore in the previous scene.]

STREPSIADES. It's hard to carry, with so many bedbugs to fight!

SOKRATES. Get a move on there. Put it down. Pay attention.

STREPSIADES. Okay.

SOKRATES. Right then, what's the first thing you'd really *like* to learn?

Choose a subject you've never been taught before. Well, what?

Perhaps about metrical units, or verses, or rhythms?*

STREPSIADES. About units of measure. That's good. Just a few days ago

I was cheated of two whole units by a barley-seller. 640

SOKRATES. Not *that* kind of unit! I mean: what's your favourite *metre*?

Is it three-measure verses or four-measure verses you like?*

STREPSIADES. I'd choose half a bushel of barley—there's nothing to beat it.

SOKRATES. What on earth are you talking about?

STREPSIADES. I bet you I'm right.

What else is a four-measure unit if not a half-bushel?

SOKRATES. To hell with you! What a bumpkin and cretin you are!

[*Sarcastically*] You'll learn about rhythms in no time at all, that's clear.

STREPSIADES. But what use are rhythms to me, compared to barley?

SOKRATES. It'll help to make you modish on social occasions

If you show you know exactly what kind of rhythm 650

The 'military beat' or the 'bending finger' is.*

STREPSIADES. The bending finger? By Zeus, that's easy.

SOKRATES. Well tell me.

STREPSIADES. What else but making a naughty gesture like this?*

When I was a boy, all those years ago, we loved it!

SOKRATES. How crude and vulgar!

STREPSIADES. You seem to be missing the point.

It's not rhythms I want to learn.

SOKRATES. Well *what* is it, then?

STREPSIADES. What I mentioned before: that immoral way of debating.

SOKRATES. But you need to learn other things first. Now here's an example:

Which animals rightly belong to the masculine gender?*

STREPSIADES. I know all the masculine ones. Any fool knows that!

660

The ram, the goat, the bull, the dog, and the cock-fowl.

SOKRATES. You see what you're doing? The word for cock you've used

Is the same one you always use for hens as well.

STREPSIADES. Is that really so?

SOKRATES. But of course: you say 'cock' for both.*

STREPSIADES. By Poseidon, that's right! Well, what should I say then instead?

SOKRATES. Cockess, you should say, and call the male a he-cock.

STREPSIADES. Cockess? How I like that word, by your god the Air!*

You've taught me something already that makes me grateful:

I'll repay you by giving you grain for your kneading-trough.

SOKRATES. You're doing the same again. A kneading-trough 670

Is a feminine noun but the ending's wrong.

STREPSIADES. How come?

Am I making it masculine instead?

SOKRATES. Exactly.

It's just the same with Kleonymos.*

STREPSIADES. What? Explain.

SOKRATES. He's a feminine thing that's given a masculine name!

STREPSIADES. But you'll find Kleonymos used no kneading-trough.

[*Gesturing obscenely*] He used himself as a pestle inside a round mortar!*

Well how should I change my language in future?

SOKRATES. It's simple.

Say a 'kneading-troughess', so it serves as a feminine noun.

STREPSIADES. A kneading-troughess?

SOKRATES. Yes, that makes your grammar correct.

STREPSIADES. So it's kneading-troughess—and Kleonymess
as well.

680

SOKRATES. But there's more besides you must learn on the
gender of names,

Dividing masculine forms from the feminine ones.

STREPSIADES. I know all the feminine ones.

SOKRATES. Well tell me them then.

STREPSIADES. Lysilla, Philinna, Kleitagora, Demetria.

SOKRATES. Now give me the masculine ones.

STREPSIADES. There are thousands
of those.

Philoxenos, Melesias, Ameinias.

SOKRATES. How hopeless you are! But *those* are not masculine
names.

STREPSIADES. Do you people really not think so?

SOKRATES. We certainly
don't.

Well how would you greet Ameinias if you met him?

STREPSIADES. It's obvious, isn't it? 'Hoy there, Ameinia!'^{*}

690

SOKRATES. You see? That's a woman's name—Amein*ia*.

STREPSIADES. Well it serves him right for dodging military
service!^{*}

But what am I learning this for? It's all common knowledge.

SOKRATES. Never mind. But lie down here instead.

STREPSIADES. What for?

SOKRATES. It's time to think very deeply about your problems.^{*}

STREPSIADES. No, please, I beg you, not here. If I really must,

Let me lie on the ground if I need to use deep thought.

SOKRATES. You've got no choice.

STREPSIADES. What a miserable prospect's in
store.

These bedbugs will punish me here for the rest of the day!

[SOKRATES goes back into the School. STREPSIADES lies down but immediately begins to writhe around in discomfort. The CHORUS moves forward into the orchêstra and surrounds his bed as it sings the following.]

CHORUS. Use concentrated thought and vision. *Strophe* 700

In every way intensify yourself

Then let your mind spin. If you fall into

Perplexity, jump straight to a different
 Train of thought. Make sure that sleep,
 With its soothing sweetness, shuns your eyes.

STREPSIADES. Aaaaaaaaargh! Aaaaaaaaargh!

CHORUS. What troubles you? What ails you?*

STREPSIADES. I'm in deep distress and pain. Inside this bed

There's a horde of biting bugs—Korinthisian ones!*

710

[*Chanting*] My ribs they're devouring,
 My life-blood they're drinking,
 My testicles they're lacerating,
 My anus they're excavating,
 And they're going to finish me off!

CHORUS. Don't let the pain wear you down too much.

STREPSIADES. But how can I not when

My property's gone, my complexion's gone,

My soul has gone and my shoes have gone,*

And piled on top of all these woes

720

Awake all night like a singing watchman

I'm almost a total goner!

[*The CHORUS steps back again, apart from the LEADER. SOKRATES now re-enters and stands menacingly over STREPSIADES' bed.*]

SOKRATES. Well what are you up to? I hope you're *thinking*.

STREPSIADES.

What

me?

By Poseidon, I am!

SOKRATES. Then tell me what thoughts you've had.

STREPSIADES. I've been asking myself if the bedbugs will leave me
 alive.

SOKRATES [*turning aside*]. You deserve to die!

STREPSIADES.

But I'm already dead

in this bed.

LEADER. You mustn't give up. Just cover yourself with the bedding.

You need to discover the mental techniques to cheat

And defraud.

STREPSIADES. I can't! Who'd find clever thoughts of
 cheating

While lying beneath a pile of sheepskin covers?

730

[STREPSIADES *disappears under the bedding*. SOKRATES *ponders the bed for a moment before speaking again*.]

SOKRATES. Right then, let me make a fresh start and see what he's doing.*

Hey you, are you sleeping?

STREPSIADES [*peering out*]. By Apollo I'm certainly not.

SOKRATES. Have you *grasped* anything?

STREPSIADES.

Not at all.

SOKRATES.

What, nothing

whatever?

STREPSIADES. The one thing I've grasped is my prick—under here in my hand!

SOKRATES. Well cover your head, get on with it: start some *thinking*.

STREPSIADES. Start thinking of what? Please give me some hints, Sokrates.

SOKRATES. Discover the subject yourself and say what you want.

STREPSIADES. I've told you a million times what I really want—

To avoid ever having to pay back the money I borrowed!

SOKRATES. Well cover yourself, then release and refine your thoughts

740

Before gradually thinking your way around the problem,

Making careful divisions and probes.

STREPSIADES [*wriggling around*]. Oh no, please help me!

SOKRATES. Keep still. If you find your ideas have reached a dead end,

Let them go, turn back round. Then using your full mental powers

Reactivate your thought and weigh up the problem.

STREPSIADES [*popping up*]. Dear Sokratiddles, I've got it!

SOKRATES.

Got

what, old man?

STREPSIADES. A thought that will cheat my creditors out of their interest.

SOKRATES. Explain it to me.

STREPSIADES. Well give me your view.

SOKRATES.

Of what?

STREPSIADES. Suppose I hire a Thessalian sorceress*

And get her to draw down the moon from the sky at night. 750

Then I'd lock the moon away in a big round case,

Just like a mirror, and guard it with all my care.

SOKRATES. What possible good would this do you?

STREPSIADES. The point,
you see,

Is that if the moon never rose in the sky again,

I'd never pay back all the interest.

SOKRATES. But why ever not?

STREPSIADES. Because the money is lent on a monthly basis!

SOKRATES. What a wonderful trick! Let me give you another
conundrum.

Suppose you were taken to court for the sum of five talents.*

Tell me how you'd manage to have the charge wiped out.

STREPSIADES. How to have it wiped out? I don't know. But I'll
search for the answer. 760

SOKRATES [*encouraging*]. Don't always keep your mind cooped up
inside you,

But release your thoughts to float in the air above

Like a beetle whose foot you've tied with a piece of string.*

STREPSIADES. I've found it, the cleverest way of annulling the
charge!

I'm sure you'll agree yourself this is good.

SOKRATES. What is it?

STREPSIADES. Do you know that thing which medicine-sellers
possess?

You've surely seen it—that lovely, translucent stone

With which they kindle fire?

SOKRATES. You're talking of glass?*

STREPSIADES. That's it! Well suppose I got hold of this object
myself,

Then when the clerk of the court was writing the charge 770
[*gesturing*] I stood to one side like this and facing the sun

Used the glass to melt the writing which spells out the charge?*

SOKRATES. What cleverness, by the Graces!

STREPSIADES. And what a relief

That a five-talent charge against me has been wiped out!

SOKRATES. Let's see how quickly you grasp this too.

STREPSIADES. What is it?

SOKRATES. Think how you'd challenge a lawsuit with one of
your own

If it seemed you were going to lose and you had no witness.

STREPSIADES. That's easy, no problem at all!

SOKRATES. Well how?

STREPSIADES. I'll tell you.

I'd wait till the very last case before my own

Then before I was called I'd—run off and hang myself! 780

SOKRATES. That's no answer at all.

STREPSIADES. I assure you it certainly is.

I won't be tried in court once they find that I'm dead!

SOKRATES. What nonsense! Get lost! I'm tired of trying to
teach you.

STREPSIADES. But what's the matter? Please carry on, Sokrates.

SOKRATES. But you keep forgetting whatever you've started to
learn.

Look: what was the *first* thing I taught you? Just tell me that.

STREPSIADES [*straining*]. Let me see, the *first*, what was it? Oh,
what was first?

What's the thing in which we knead our barley grain?

Oh dear, what was it?

SOKRATES. Just go to the crows and rot!*

You're the most forgetful and stupid old man in the world! 790

[SOKRATES *moves away in frustration but remains within earshot.*]

STREPSIADES [*to himself*]. Oh no, I'm doomed! What's now in
store for me?

I'm ruined for failing to learn all these tongue-twisting words.

[*To CHORUS*] Please, Clouds, I need you to give me some helpful
advice.

LEADER. Our advice to you, old fellow, would be as follows.

If you happen to have a son you've reared at home,

Send *him* instead of yourself to learn in this school.

STREPSIADES. I certainly *do*—he's a fine and handsome
young man.

But he simply refuses to learn, so what can I do?

LEADER. And you let him say no?

STREPSIADES. He's bigger and stronger than me,

And he comes from a line of preening Koisyra-like women.* 800

PHEIDIPPIDES. I certainly did.

STREPSIADES. Well I'll show you how useful is
knowledge.

Zeus doesn't exist, Pheidippides!

PHEIDIPPIDES. He *doesn't*?

STREPSIADES. It's Swirl who's driven Zeus out and is ruling the
world.*

PHEIDIPPIDES. What disgusting drivell!

STREPSIADES. I assure you it's all
quite true.

PHEIDIPPIDES. Who claims all this? 830

STREPSIADES. It's Sokrates from Melos*

And Chairephon—who knows how to track fleas' feet.*

PHEIDIPPIDES. Have you gone quite out of your mind? You
surely don't

Believe such crazy lunatics?

STREPSIADES. Watch your words!

Don't dare abuse these men: they're really clever

And full of intelligent thoughts. They don't waste money

On grooming their hair or rubbing themselves with good oil

Or going to wash in the baths.* Whereas you, by contrast,

Are washing my *life* down the drain with the money you waste.

[*Pointing to door B*] Please go in there and be taught for your
father's sake.

PHEIDIPPIDES. But what could I learn from these men that
would be any use? 840

STREPSIADES. Do you need to ask? They teach all human wisdom.

They'll lead you to know yourself—how you're stupid and thick!*

But wait for me here just a moment until I come back. [*Exits into
door A.*]

PHEIDIPPIDES. What on earth should I do? My father's lost
his wits.

Should I get a court order and have him declared insane?*

Or even prepare for his death and order his coffin?

[STREPSIADES *returns with a SLAVE who is carrying both a cock and
a hen.*]

STREPSIADES. Let's see then. What do you call this bird? Please
tell me.

PHEIDIPPIDES. It's a cock.

STREPSIADES. Okay, that's fine. But what about *this*?

PHEIDIPPIDES. It's also a cock.

STREPSIADES. The same? What ludicrous nonsense!

You need to know better in future. Call this one here 850

A cockess, and refer to the other one there as a he-cock.

PHEIDIPPIDES. Cockess! Are *these* the ingenious things that you learnt

From your recent visit in there to those ancient clods?

STREPSIADES. They taught me lots more besides. But whatever I learnt

I kept forgetting at once because I'm so old.

PHEIDIPPIDES. And is that the reason you've lost your cloak as well?*

STREPSIADES. It's not true that I've *lost* it. It's just that I've *thought* it away.

PHEIDIPPIDES. And your shoes as well? What's happened to those, you fool?

STREPSIADES. As Perikles said—I lost them 'for special reasons'.*

But come along, please, let's go. Just humour your father, 860

No matter if right or wrong. [*Wheeling*] I humoured *you*

When you were no more than a lisping child of six.

With the very first obol I earned for jury service

I bought you a little toy cart for the Diasia.*

PHEIDIPPIDES. I assure you you'll live to regret this action one day.

STREPSIADES. Well done for obeying.

[*Calling into door B.*] Come out here, Sokrates,

Come out! I've brought this son of mine here with me.

It was hard to persuade him.

[SOKRATES *emerges and glances quickly at PHEIDIPPIDES.*]

SOKRATES. No wonder, he looks so childish!

It'll be hard work to teach him the ropes round here.

PHEIDIPPIDES. You could do with a rope yourself—to be strung up! 870

STREPSIADES. To hell with you! How dare you curse your teacher?

SOKRATES. Just listen, 'strung up'! What a babyish voice he's got:

He pronounces his words with his lips all hanging apart.

No hope he'll learn to win an acquittal in court

Or how to bring summons or use persuasive bluster.

Then again, *Hyperbolos* learnt these things—for a talent.*

STREPSIADES. Never mind, just teach him. You'll find he's an eager learner.

While still a tiny child, [*sentimentally*] no higher than this,

He used to make clay houses and carve little boats,

He also made little toy carts from pieces of fig-wood, 880

And frogs out of pomegranate peel, just imagine!

So get him to learn that pair of arguments here,

The stronger, whichever that is, and the weaker as well,

The one whose immoral claims can knock out the stronger.

If he can't learn both, it's the immoral one he must learn!

SOKRATES. He'll learn himself from the arguments in person.

I won't be here. [*Starts to exit through door B.*]

STREPSIADES. Well please remember this,

Make sure that he learns to rebut all rightful claims!

[*From door B there now emerges MORAL, soon followed by IMMORAL. From 889 to 948 they exchange short lines in 'recitative' mode, chanted to the accompaniment of the pipe-player. STREPSIADES and PHEIDIPPIDES observe the whole confrontation.*]*

MORAL. Come over here then! Show yourself

To the audience there. What an impudent thing! 890

IMMORAL. Go wherever you want! The bigger the crowd

The more I'll argue you into the ground.

MORAL. What *you*?

IMMORAL. With my words.

MORAL. But you're weaker than me.

IMMORAL. All the same I'll defeat

One who makes the claim that he's stronger than me.

MORAL. What's your clever trick then?

IMMORAL. I have *new* ideas I've discovered myself.

MORAL. Well such things only flourish

[*gesturing at audience*] On account of these idiots sitting in front of us here.

IMMORAL. But these people are *clever*.

MORAL. I'll tear you to shreds.

- IMMORAL. And how will you do it? 900
- MORAL. By making just claims.
- IMMORAL. But I'll knock them all down and refute them as well.
I don't even admit that Justice exists!*
- MORAL. You deny she exists?
- IMMORAL. Show me where she is then!
- MORAL. She lives with the gods.
- IMMORAL. Well if Justice exists how is it that Zeus
Hasn't been destroyed for binding in chains
His very own father?*
- MORAL. Ugh! Listen to this
Disgusting stuff. You make me puke!
- IMMORAL. A deranged and senile wreck you are!
- MORAL. A gaping, shaming asshole you are!
- IMMORAL. These names smell like roses to me. 910
- MORAL. Buffoon!
- IMMORAL. A garland of lilies.
- MORAL. You father-beater!
- IMMORAL. You bedeck me with gold but just don't know it.
- MORAL. In the past this 'gold' was regarded as lead.
- IMMORAL. But now such abuse is adornment to me.
- MORAL. You impudent scoundrel!
- IMMORAL. You archaic relic!
- MORAL. It's all your fault
That the young won't go to normal school.
One day all Athens will recognize
The things you teach your foolish pupils.
- IMMORAL. You're shrivelled and ugly. 920
- MORAL. While *you* grow rich.
Yet in the past you were just a beggar,
Like Mysian Telephos, you claimed,
With a pouch from which
You nibbled the maxims of Pandeletos.*
- IMMORAL. Ah yes, what wisdom—
- MORAL. Oh no, what madness—
- IMMORAL. . . . you're talking about.
- MORAL. . . . is displayed by the city
That nurtures you
To drip poison into the minds of the young.

IMMORAL. An old dotard like you won't teach this young man.

MORAL. But he certainly needs to be protected 930
From learning no more than *your* sort of
prattle.

[IMMORAL and MORAL both try to draw PHEIDIPPIDES over to their
side; a brief scuffle develops.]

IMMORAL. Come here to me, leave this luny alone.

MORAL. I'll make you suffer if you touch this boy.

LEADER. You must stop this fighting and all this abuse.
Expound instead

[to MORAL] The way you taught in olden times

[to IMMORAL] And you in turn
Your new education. He'll hear the
debate

And go to the school he decides is the best.

MORAL. I'm willing to do this.

IMMORAL. And I'm willing too.

LEADER. Very well. Now which of you's going to speak first? 940

IMMORAL. I'll let *him* go first.

Whatever he chooses to say in his speech

I'll use locutions new and fancy

And clever thoughts to shoot him down.

By the end, if he dares to mutter a protest,

He'll find his face and both his eyes

Are covered in stings, as though by wasps.

My ideas will finish him off!

[AGON I: 949-1104]

CHORUS. They'll show us now, confident in
Their ever so clever

Strophe

Arguments and deepest thoughts

950

And mind-shaped ponderings,

Which of the two will

Prove the superior speaker.

Now is the time and place

For a dangerous gamble with wisdom:

These friends of mine are facing

The greatest contest of all.

LEADER [*to MORAL*]. O you who crowned our ancestors with many
noble virtues,
Break into speech of the kind you enjoy and describe your nature
to us. 960

MORAL. I'll tell you then the kind of education that once
prevailed
When I flourished for holding upright views and self-control was
a virtue.
No child would ever be heard, for one thing, indulging in whining
complaints.
When going to music lessons, moreover, they walked through the
streets in good order,*
A group from each neighbourhood—lightly clad too, no matter
how heavy the snow.
They were trained to learn their songs by heart (and no fooling
around with their thingies!)*
Such as 'Pallas, fearsome sacker of cities' or 'Far-travelling cry of
the lyre':*
They sang these songs to traditional tunes which their fathers had
handed on down.
If a boy at that time ever monkeyed around and twisted
a tune out of key
The way that they do everywhere these days, like Phrynis's
frightful contortions,* 971
He would have been thrashed repeatedly for spoiling the work of
the Muses.
In the wrestling school all boys were expected to sit on the floor
with legs crossed*
To avoid giving onlookers even a glimpse of things that might
cause their eyes torment.
When he stood up again, each boy was required to smooth the
sand back over
To make sure he left no trace of his manhood for lovers to stand
and observe.
No boy in those days ever rubbed with oil the parts beneath his
navel;
They let their genitals glisten with down, all dewy, just like
that on quinces.

And none of them used a sexy softness of voice in speaking to
lovers

Or played the part of pimps for themselves with their eyes when
walking along. 980

When eating dinner they weren't allowed to take the head of
a radish

Nor to grab some dill or celery either, when these things were
there for their elders,

Nor to choose any special foods or giggle or sit with their legs
crossed over.

IMMORAL. What primitive tosh—like the Dipolieia or old
cicada brooches

Or Kekeides that awful poet or ox-slaying rites!*

MORAL. But these things

Enabled my style of education to nurture those
Marathon-fighters.*

Whereas *you* now teach the young to wrap themselves in cloaks
like blankets.

It makes me choke to watch when they have to dance at the
Panathenaia

And they hold their shields by their thighs with no care for
Athena Tritogeneia.*

[*To PHEIDIPPIDES*] So listen, young man, stand firm, choose me,
the *stronger* argument. 990

If you do, you'll hate the Agora's ways and keep away from the
baths

And you'll feel ashamed of shameful things and blush when
someone mocks you

And give up your seat on a public bench if an older man
approaches

And you'll never misbehave at all or upset your very own parents
Or commit a single shameful deed that will tarnish your modest
image.

Still less will you rush to a dancing-girl's house: if you do go and
gawp at such things,

A prostitute may toss you an apple and then your good name will
collapse.*

You'll always obey your father and never abuse him by mocking
his age

Or make complaints about how you were treated when just
a young bird in the nest.

IMMORAL. If you follow all *that* advice, young man, I swear by the
god Dionysos 1000

You'll resemble Hippokrates' sons and people will call you a big
namby-pamby.*

MORAL. But your body will gleam with a youthful bloom, you'll
spend all your time in the gym

Not round the Agora prattling recondite barbs in the current
manner,

Nor dragged to court to take part in a piece of pointless, confused
litigation.

Instead to the Academy's groves you'll go, with its sacred olive
trees,*

And you'll race with another well-behaved boy, a crown of white
reeds on your head.

You'll smell of yew, of a trouble-free life, and of fragrant poplar
leaves;

You'll relish the days of spring, when plane tree and elm exchange
their whispers.

If you do the things I urge you to,
And concentrate on sticking to these, 1010
You'll be assured of

A gleaming chest and glowing skin,
Big broad shoulders, a minimal tongue,
The stoutest buttocks, a tiny willy.

But if you follow the *current* fashions

You're bound to develop
The palest skin and tiny shoulders,

A puny chest, a massive tongue,

A tiny haunch, a big *decree*!*

And *he*'ll persuade you that everything
shameful 1020

Is really good, and vice versa.

To cap it all, like Antimachos

You'll be a buggered arsehole!*

CHORUS. O you who build wisdom's edifice *Antistrophe*
To its beautiful towered heights,

How lovely to smell on your words
The fragrance of self-control.
Happy were those who lived in that former age!

[*To IMMORAL*] In reply, O you with the slickest of tongues, 1030
You must find something novel to say.
Your opponent has proved impressive.

LEADER. You're going to need a resourceful scheme to make your
case against him,
If you hope to defeat this man and don't want to appear
a laughing-stock.

IMMORAL. But it's just this chance I've been waiting for, my guts
were choking with rage!
I could hardly wait to contradict him and smash all his words to
pieces.
It's not for nothing that intellectuals all call me by the name
Of the weaker argument: it's because I was first to have the idea
Of always choosing to contradict what the laws and justice
expect. 1040

It's worth a fortune in coins of gold to have a knack like mine,
To choose what seems the weaker case yet manage to win the
debate!

[*To PHEIDIPPIDES*] Just watch me refute this education in which
he puts such trust.

Let's start with his claim that he won't allow you to go and enjoy
hot baths.

[*To MORAL*] What possible reason can you produce for finding
fault with hot baths?

MORAL. It's because they're a truly terrible thing: they make
a person spineless.

IMMORAL. Aha, stop there! I've got you at once in my grip and
you'll never escape.*

Just tell me this: which son of Zeus do you think was the
noblest man,
The one who had the finest spirit and toiled at the greatest
labours?

MORAL. There's no one higher in my esteem than great Herakles
himself. 1050

IMMORAL. Well where have you seen *cold* baths that bear the name of Herakles, then?*

Yet no one's more a *man* than him.

MORAL. I knew it! I saw it coming!

It's arguments like these that make young men frequent the baths
To spend their days in idle chatter, deserting the
wrestling-grounds.

IMMORAL. And spending time in the Agora's something else that you hate but I like.*

But if it was wrong, you wouldn't have found that Homer himself described

Old Nestor as being an agora-speaker, and other wise characters too.*

And next I'll address the role of the tongue: my opponent here says that it's bad

For the young to cultivate its use—but that's what I strongly advise!

He says, what's more, that self-control is needed: another great blunder!

1060

[To MORAL] Can you name a single occasion when self-control has proved itself

Any use at all? Well, answer the question. Refute me, let's see you try.

MORAL. There are many cases—Peleus, for one: it was virtue that earned him his knife.*

IMMORAL. A *knife*! Well there's a handsome reward. Is that *all* the poor devil received?

Contrast the huge amounts of money Hyperbolos, seller of lamps,*

Has made from living a life of corruption—but no one gave him a knife!

MORAL. There was marriage to Thetis as well for Peleus because of his self-control.

IMMORAL. But later she left him and went away. He wasn't aggressive enough

And wasn't much fun when it came to spending the night together in bed.*

A woman likes nothing so much as rough treatment. But *you're* a relic of Kronos.

1070

[To PHEIDIPPIDES] Consider, young man, the implications of practising self-control,
And think of all the pleasures you'll lose if *that's* the life that you choose:

Boys, women, and parties, food and drink, and the stuff of roaring laughter.

What point would there be in life at all if deprived of all these pleasures?

Right then, the next thing I need to address is the topic of nature's compulsion.

Suppose you conceived an adulterous passion, indulged it, but then you were caught.

You're doomed, you can't defend yourself—unless you make *me* your friend.

If you do, you'll indulge your instincts, cavort, laugh aloud, think nothing is wrong.

Then if you're caught in adulterous acts, you can tell the woman's husband

You haven't committed a crime at all! You can even refer him to Zeus,

1080

Pointing out that even *he* succumbs to sexual passion for women,
So how can a mortal like you be expected to do what a god cannot do?

MORAL. But what if he takes your advice and receives retribution by radish and ashes?*

Will he have any argument then to prevent himself becoming wide-arsed?

IMMORAL. And suppose he does become wide-arsed, so what?*

MORAL. Well what could he suffer that's really worse than that?

IMMORAL. Then what will you say if I manage to win this point?

MORAL. I'll be lost for words, what else?

IMMORAL. Then tell me this:

What sort of people are advocates?

MORAL. They're all wide-arsed.

1090

IMMORAL. I quite agree.

And what sort of people are tragic poets?

MORAL. They're wide-arsed too.

IMMORAL. You've got that right.

And the politicians? What sort are they?

MORAL. They're wide-arsed too.

IMMORAL. Then haven't you grasped

That your principles are nothing but tosh?

And look at the audience, what's the main sort you see?

MORAL. I'm looking at them.

IMMORAL. And what do you see?

MORAL. The great majority, by the gods,

Are wide-arsed types! [*Pointing*] This one over here

Is one, I can tell, and that one there,

And this long-haired one here as well.

1100

IMMORAL. So what do you say?

MORAL. We've lost! And all you fucked ones,

I beg you by the gods to take my cloak:

I'm defecting now to your side!

[MORAL drops his cloak at IMMORAL's feet and rushes off through door B (or alternatively into the audience itself). IMMORAL now turns to STREPSIADES, who has watched the whole debate.]

IMMORAL. Well, what do you want to do, take your son away

Or leave him here with me to be taught to argue?

STREPSIADES. Yes, teach him, don't spare the rod. And please remember

To train him well, so his tongue becomes a sword:

On one side sharp for dealing with minor lawsuits,

While the other side's ready to deal with the really big things. 1110

IMMORAL. Don't worry, we'll give you him back as a quick-witted expert.

PHEIDIPPIDES. More likely all pale and woebegone, you mean!

[IMMORAL leads the reluctant PHEIDIPPIDES into the Thinking Institute through door B. STREPSIADES turns and goes into his house, door A, as the CHORUS starts to perform.]

CHORUS. Go on your way then! [*To STREPSIADES*] But you, I think, Will soon regret these things.

[SECOND PARABASIS: 1115-30]

LEADER. Now's the time for us to state the benefits that await the judges

If they do the proper thing and show their favour to this chorus.

First of all, whenever you think the time is right to plough your
 fields,
 Yours will be the ones we Clouds will rain on first, before the rest.
 Next we'll take good care of all the fruit that hangs along your
 vines,
 Making sure it suffers neither drought nor deluges of rain. 1120
 Woe betide that judge who as a mortal slights these goddesses.
 Best for him to ponder closely all the harms he'll then endure:
 Land of his will yield him neither wine nor anything else at all.
 Once his olive trees and vines begin to sprout their annual shoots,
 Off we'll chop the lot with downfalls just as hard as slingers'
 shots.
 Should we see him making bricks we'll send a downpour on
 his roof
 Smashing all his roof-tiles into bits with hailstones large and
 round.
 Wedding-feasts suppose he plans, his own or for his kith and kin:
Rain will pour the whole night through, to make him wish for
 somewhere else—
 Even Egypt he'd prefer, a lesson to learn for judging wrong! 1130

[STREPSIADES *comes back out of his house.*]

STREPSIADES [*counting*]. The fifth, the fourth, the third, and then
 the second.

And then the day of all the days in the month
 That I dread and makes me shudder and want to puke—
 The 'old-and-new', the very last day of the month.*
 That's when every one of my creditors swears he'll start
 The legal procedure to tear my life to pieces.
 The pleas I make are entirely modest and fair:
 'I beg you, sir, don't ask for it all just now.'
 'Defer this part, and waive that part.' No use:
 They say they'll lose their money, they shout abuse, 1140
 They accuse me of crime and insist they'll take me to court.
 Well *let* them take me to court. I couldn't care less,
 Provided Pheidippides has learned to argue!
 I'll knock on the Thinking Institute now and check. [*Bangs on*
door B.]
 Hoy, slave, open up!

SOKRATES [*opening abruptly*]. Ah, Strepsiades, hello.

STREPSIADES. Hello to you too. [*Handing him something*] I'd like you to take this first.

It's right to show the teacher a little respect.

And tell me about my son: has he managed to learn

That argument, the one you brought out before?*

SOKRATES. He's learnt it.

1150

STREPSIADES. Hurrah! O Fraud, you queen almighty!*

SOKRATES. You can now evade any lawsuit you care to imagine.

STREPSIADES. What, even if witnesses saw when I borrowed the money?

SOKRATES. Yes, all the more! Who cares if a thousand were present!

STREPSIADES [*breaking into exuberant song*].

I'll raise a cry at the highest intensity

Of joy! Go hang, you moneylenders,

You and your loans and your compound interest!

You can no longer do me the slightest harm,

Such is my offspring,

The child within this dwelling,

His tongue a gleaming two-edged sword,*

1160

My bulwark, my house's saviour, my enemies' ruin,

Liberator from his father's great woes.

Run inside and call him here to me! [SOKRATES *exits through door B.*]

O child, o son, come outside the house,

Heed the voice of your father!

[SOKRATES *returns with PHEIDIPPIDES, the latter now looking pale and emaciated.**]

SOKRATES. Behold the man himself!

STREPSIADES. O loved one, o loved one!

SOKRATES. Take him and leave. [*Exits.*]

STREPSIADES. O joy, o joy, my child!

1170

[STREPSIADES *embraces PHEIDIPPIDES, who does not reciprocate his emotions. We now return to spoken dialogue.*]

How wonderful!

What a pleasure, to start with, to see your new complexion.

Your look gives an instant impression of always denying

And contradicting. You've got that familiar scowl
That jumps right out at one—that 'what do you mean?',
That how to look wronged when you're *in* the wrong, it's plain!
It's such an *Attic* expression that's on your face.*

Now's the time to help me: you ruined me in the past.

PHEIDIPPIDES. But what are you anxious about?

STREPSIADES. The old-and-
new day!

PHEIDIPPIDES [*argumentatively*]. But how can one day end the
month and open another?*

STREPSIADES. It's the day they threaten to institute legal
proceedings.

1180

PHEIDIPPIDES. If they do, they'll lose their legal deposits for sure.*

It just can't be that one day turns into two.

STREPSIADES. It just can't be?

PHEIDIPPIDES. Well how could it be? It's like

A woman who's old and young at the very same time.

STREPSIADES. But my creditors follow the law.

PHEIDIPPIDES. I don't believe

They know what the law really means.

STREPSIADES. But what *does* it mean?

PHEIDIPPIDES. Solon of old loved the people right from the
heart.*

STREPSIADES. But what's that got to do with the end of the month?

PHEIDIPPIDES. Well, Solon decided a summons should take
two days,

The final day of the month and the first of the next,

1190

So legal deposits be placed when the moon is new.*

STREPSIADES. But why did he add the last day too?

PHEIDIPPIDES. He wanted

Defendants to have the chance to turn up that day

And settle without litigation. Then if they didn't,

They'd find themselves in distress on the day of new moon.

STREPSIADES. Why then is it not on the day of the new moon itself

But the day before that the magistrates take deposits?

PHEIDIPPIDES. It's just like what happens, I think, with tasters
of food.*

To give them the chance to embezzle the money at once,

They get their hands on the funds the previous day.

1200

STREPSIADES. I like it! [*To audience*] But why are you wretches
 sitting like dummies,
 Dupes of us clever people, as dumb as stones,
 Mere masses, moronic sheep, a pile of old jars?
 I feel it's time to sing a song of praise
 For myself and my son, to celebrate our success.

‘What happiness, Strepsiades,
 Is yours for being so clever
 And rearing a son like this!’
 That's what my friends and demesmen*
 Will say with envy when you speak in court 1210
 And win the cases against us.
 Let me take you indoors and serve you a feast.

[STREPSIADES and PHEIDIPPIDES go back into their house through door A. As they do so, CREDITOR^A enters from one of the eisodoi in mid-conversation with his WITNESS.]

CREDITOR^A. Is a man supposed just to kiss goodbye to his money?
 I'll never do it! It would have been better back then
 To suffer embarrassment rather than take on this trouble.
 Look where things stand: for the sake of obtaining my money
 I'm dragging you here as a witness, and in addition
 I'll be locked in feud with a fellow-demesman of mine.
 Still, as long as I live I'll never bring shame on my homeland. 1220
 I'll issue this summons to Strepsiades—

STREPSIADES [*emerging suddenly*]. Who's this?

CREDITOR^A. —for the old-and-new day of the month.

STREPSIADES [*sarcastically*]. I call for
 a witness.

He referred just now to *two* days! And what debt do you mean?

CREDITOR^A. Twelve minas: the sum you borrowed from me to buy
 The dapple-grey horse.*

STREPSIADES. A horse! [*To audience*] Do you hear what
 he says?

When all of you know that I loathe equestrian matters.

CREDITOR^A. But by Zeus you swore by the gods that you'd pay back
 the money.

STREPSIADES. But by Zeus that was so long ago, before my son

Pheidippides learnt how to argue and win any case.

CREDITOR^A. You mean you intend to *deny* that you owe the money?

1230

STREPSIADES. What else was the point of having Pheidippides taught?

CREDITOR^A. Are you ready to swear a supporting oath by the gods
In a place of my choice?

STREPSIADES. By the gods? *What* gods do you mean?*

CREDITOR^A. Zeus, Hermes, Poseidon, for instance.

STREPSIADES. Well yes,
by Zeus,

I'd pay three obols for having the fun of an oath!*

CREDITOR^A. I hope you'll rot one day for this shamelessness.

[STREPSIADES *nonchalantly pats the CREDITOR's protruding belly.*]

STREPSIADES. You know, a good rubbing with salt is all that this needs.*

CREDITOR^A. How dare you mock me!

STREPSIADES. Just right for a nice big
wineskin.

CREDITOR^A. I swear by great Zeus as well as the rest of the gods
You won't get away with this.

1240

STREPSIADES [*guffawing*]. How hilarious, 'gods'!

And to those in the know it's absurd to swear by Zeus.

CREDITOR^A. You'll pay for this in court, you mark my words.

But do you intend to return the money or not?

I need an answer before I leave.

STREPSIADES. Stay calm:

I'm going to give you a very clear answer at once.

[STREPSIADES *dashes into his house. CREDITOR^A, baffled, turns to his*
WITNESS.]

CREDITOR^A. What d'you think he's going to do? Will he give me the money?

[STREPSIADES *comes back out carrying a kneading-trough.*]

STREPSIADES. Well where's this fellow who wants the return of his loan.

Do you know what this is?

CREDITOR^A. Of course, it's a kneading-trough.

STREPSIADES. So you don't even know such things, yet you ask for your money!

I'm not prepared to return a single obol

1250

To someone who gets their basic grammar all wrong.*

CREDITOR^A [*bemused*]. So you won't repay the loan?

STREPSIADES. Not as far as

I know!

Come on now, time to hurry along, buzz off

From my door.

CREDITOR^A. I'm going, but let me assure you of this:

I vow on my life that I'll start a legal procedure.

[*He starts to leave with his* WITNESS. STREPSIADES *shouts the following lines mockingly after him before turning towards the house door.*]

STREPSIADES. Then you'll lose your deposit as well as the money

I borrowed!*

It's a shame, though—not what I want you to suffer at all

Just because you appeared a grammatical ignoramus!

[*Enter from the opposite eisodos the bruised and battered figure of* CREDITOR^B. STREPSIADES *pauses at his house door.*]

CREDITOR^B. Oh woe, oh woe!

STREPSIADES. What now?

Who on earth have we got here crying in loud lament? 1260

[*Ironically*] Did I hear the voice of a god from old Karkinos' plays?*

CREDITOR^B [*melodramatically*]. Does the world really want to know who stands before it?

An ill-fated man.

STREPSIADES. Then keep yourself out of my way!

CREDITOR^B. Harsh destiny's mine! O chariot-wrecking fortune

That befell my horses! O Pallas, my ruination!

STREPSIADES [*ironically*]. What evil has Tlempolemos made you bear?*

CREDITOR^B. Don't mock me, old chap. I just want my money, that's all.

Tell that son of yours to repay the loan that I gave him,

Especially now that I've fallen on such hard times.

STREPSIADES. What money is that?

1270

CREDITOR^B. I call for witnesses!

[A SLAVE comes out of door A with a large horsewhip. STREPSIADES starts to whip CREDITOR^B with exaggeratedly equestrian gestures.]

STREPSIADES. Giddy up! What's wrong? Pull my chariot, pedigree horse!

CREDITOR^B [*fleeing*]. This is brutal assault!

STREPSIADES. Get going! I'll have to goad you

With a good sharp stab in the anus, you sluggish trace-horse.* 1300

Are you running away? I knew I'd make you scarper

With all those chariot wheels and horses of yours.

[As CREDITOR^B exits by a side entrance, STREPSIADES goes back inside his house.]

CHORUS. Ah, folly to set one's heart on sordid things! *Strophe*
 This old man's passion
 Is to cheat his creditors,
 Steal the money he borrowed.
 It's inevitable on this very day
 He'll find himself involved
 In a turn of events
 That despite his clever designs
 Will make the crime he's started 1310
 Abruptly become his undoing!

I think he's about to find the very thing *Antistrophe*
 He's long been seeking—
 A son resourceful enough
 To come up with ideas
 That contradict what's right
 And can win every argument
 In which he's entangled
 No matter how wicked his words.
 But maybe just maybe he'll wish
 His son couldn't speak after all! 1320

[STREPSIADES comes rushing out of his house, clearly in physical distress and followed almost immediately by a swaggering PHEIDIPPIDES.]

STREPSIADES. Help! Help!

My neighbours and kinsmen and fellow-demesmen of mine,

I need you to come and protect me. I'm being attacked.

I'm in terrible pain all over my head and my face.

You loathsome thing, are you hitting your father?

PHEIDIPPIDES. Yes, father!

STREPSIADES [*to audience*]. Does everyone see he admits
that he's hit me?

PHEIDIPPIDES. Too true!

STREPSIADES. You loathsome father-beater, you utter delinquent!

PHEIDIPPIDES. Feel free to go on calling me names like those.

Don't you know how much pleasure I get from being abused?

STREPSIADES. You cavernous arsehole! 1330

PHEIDIPPIDES. A name that smells like
roses!*

STREPSIADES. You're prepared to hit your father?

PHEIDIPPIDES. By Zeus, I'll show

I was *right* to hit you.

STREPSIADES. Your loathesomeness knows no limits!

But how could it ever be right to beat your own father?

PHEIDIPPIDES. I'll give you the proof and win the debate
between us.

STREPSIADES. Win *this* debate?

PHEIDIPPIDES. There's nothing I'd find so easy.

Choose which of the pair of arguments is yours.

STREPSIADES. What arguments?

PHEIDIPPIDES. The stronger or the weaker.*

STREPSIADES. So it's really the case, by Zeus, that I had you trained

In contradicting what's right, if you're going to try

To argue the case that it's wholly just and proper 1340

For a son to use his fists on his very own father.

PHEIDIPPIDES. But I think you'll find I'll convince you yourself
in fact:

Once you've heard my argument stated, you'll have no reply.

STREPSIADES. Well I'd certainly like to hear what you're going to
argue.

[AGON II: 1345-1451]

CHORUS. It's your job now, old man, to think out a way *Strophe*
To defeat this opponent.

If he didn't have something to make him confident,

He wouldn't be so outrageous.
 There's something that makes him brash: just look
 At his arrogant pose!

1350

LEADER. Go back to the start and to how this fight broke out in the
 very first place.

The chorus needs to hear your account and I'm sure you'll oblige
 us now.*

STREPSIADES. I'll go back, then, to the very beginning and how our
 quarrel broke out.

It came about when we feasted at dinner, the way that you all
 understand.*

The first thing I did was to tell him to take up the lyre and sing
 a song

By Simonides—the one that tells 'How Krios the Ram was
 shorn'.*

But straight away he called it old-fashioned to take up the lyre
 like that

And to sing while drinking, the way a woman would do while
 grinding barley.

PHEIDIPIDES. Right then at the start you deserved to be thrashed
 and be pounded into the ground

When you told me to sing as though you were holding a feast for
 a group of cicadas!*

1360

STREPSIADES. It's sentiments the same as these that he uttered
 while still in the house,

And he kept on claiming Simonides was a really appalling
 poet.

I found it hard but all the same I endured this behaviour at
 first.

Then I urged him instead to take a branch of myrtle and holding
 it up*

To recite some Aischylos to me. That made him retort at once:
 'Yes of course, what else, since I take the view he's the *greatest* of
 all the poets—

All that noisy ranting, that incoherence, that bombast, those
 boulder-like words!'

At that my heart was palpitating so much, you can surely imagine.

Still I bit back my anger and said to him, 'Well, in that case, I'll
let you choose

Whatever you think are the cleverest things that those *modern*
poets now write.'

1370

His immediate choice was Euripides; he recited a speech
about how

A brother was screwing his very own sister—o Herakles, save us
from this!*

I couldn't endure any longer but started at once to assault him
with words,

Heaping up lots of filthy abuse. After that, it is hardly surprising
to tell,

We traded word for word like blows. And *then* he jumped from
his seat

And bashed me and punched me and throttled me too and wanted
to beat me to pulp.

PHEIDIPPIDES. Well wasn't I justified? You refused to praise
Euripides,

The cleverest poet.

STREPSIADES. The 'cleverest poet', what *him*! Oh, what can
I call you?*

I'm bound to get beaten again.

PHEIDIPPIDES. And by Zeus you're bound to
deserve it again!

STREPSIADES. Deserve it? How? You've lost all shame. I brought
you up as my child.

1380

[*Sentimentally*] I always tried to understand what your babyish
lispings meant.

If the word was 'wa-wa' I always held a drink to your lips for
sipping.

If you asked for 'br-br' I always rushed to give you some bread
to eat.

As soon as I heard the sound 'poo-poo' I took you straight to
the door:

I would carry you out and hold you up. Yet just now you were
strangling me.

Even though I shouted and cried aloud

That I needed a shit, you weren't prepared

To carry me out, you loathsome thing,

You kept on throttling all the time
Till I poo-pooed on the spot!

1390

CHORUS. I imagine that younger spectators' hearts are
throbbing

Antistrophe

To hear his reply.

If after doing the things we've heard about

He persuades us with his words,

The skins of older men, we think,

Won't be worth a chickpea!

LEADER. It's your job now, o mover and engineer of novel words,
To find a means of persuasion to make your case seem
wholly just.

PHEIDIPPIDES. How lovely it is to devote one's life to novel and
clever affairs

And to have the power to show contempt for traditional laws
and customs.

1400

At the time when the only thing that mattered to me was riding
horses,

I wasn't able to string together three words without some sort
of error.

But since this man over here has himself put a stop to my former
habits,

And my life's now one of subtle ideas and words and intricate
thoughts,

I think I'll be able to demonstrate that it's just to chastise one's
father.

STREPSIADES. By Zeus, I'd prefer you to ride your horses. Far
better for me, for sure,

To pay for the upkeep of four big horses than be beaten and
thrashed to pulp.

PHEIDIPPIDES. I'll return to the point where you interrupted,
pursuing my case from there.

And first of all I'll ask you this: when I was a child did you
beat me?

STREPSIADES. Of course I did, but I always had your best
interests at heart.

1410

PHEIDIPPIDES. Then tell me

Why isn't it right for me to have your best interests at heart
as well

And to beat you too, if that's what follows from showing such care
and concern?

Since why should *you* get immunity from blows for this body of
yours

When *I* didn't get it? Yet I was born just as much a free man
as you.

[*Poetically*] 'The children cry—do you really think the father can't
cry as well?''*

You'll say, no doubt, that custom fixes such treatment as fit for
children.

But my answer to that is to emphasize that old age is a *second*
childhood.

And in addition, it makes more sense for the old, not the young,
to be beaten:

There's less excuse, when they've lived so long, for the old to get
things wrong.

STREPSIADES. Yet nowhere in the world does custom allow that
a father be beaten.

1420

PHEIDIPPIDES. But wasn't the person who made that law so long
ago just a man

Like you and me, and didn't he use persuasion to win agreement?
So why shouldn't *I* be free to propose a new law in turn for the
future,

A law that states where sons are concerned they can beat their
fathers as well?

As regards all the blows we suffered ourselves before this law was
in place,

We'll not count those: we accept those beatings require no
compensation.

But consider the case of roosting cocks and the rest of the animal
kingdom,

The way they fight against their fathers—yet why should there be
any difference

Between the animal world and us, except that they don't make
decrees?

STREPSIADES. Well if you're quite so keen to model yourself on
roosting cocks,

Why don't you live on a diet of dung and sleep on a plain wooden perch?

1430

PHEIDIPPIDES. But that's not the same sort of thing at all—and it wouldn't be *Sokrates'* view.

STREPSIADES. You'd be well advised to stop striking me blows. If not, you'll regret it one day.

PHEIDIPPIDES. Why's that?

STREPSIADES. Well just as *I've* the right to use chastisement against you

So *you* in turn can chastise any son you produce.*

PHEIDIPPIDES. But suppose

I don't have one?

All those beatings I had will have been in vain and you'll be content in your grave.

STREPSIADES [*to audience*]. Well, all you men as old as me, I have to say he's right.

I think we ought to concede to the young that the points he's made are fair.

It stands to reason that *me* should be beaten for failing to do what's right.

PHEIDIPPIDES. And consider this further thought as well. 1440

STREPSIADES. No more,
it'll finish me off!

PHEIDIPPIDES. But perhaps it will stop you resenting the things you suffered a moment ago.

STREPSIADES. How's that? I'd like to know just how you'll supposedly do me good.

PHEIDIPPIDES. I'll beat my *mother* as well, like you.

STREPSIADES. But I can't
believe my ears!

Another and still bigger evil!

PHEIDIPPIDES. But what if despite my weaker
position

I can still defeat you in argument
And prove that my mother needs beating?

STREPSIADES. If that's what you do, there's nothing else left
But to take your own body and throw it into
The criminals' pit*—with Sokrates
And the Immoral argument too!

1450

[*The formal debate over, STREPSIADES now turns towards where the CHORUS is standing in order to remonstrate with it.*]

STREPSIADES. It's all your fault, you Clouds—all the things I've suffered

Since I placed my affairs entirely in your control.

LEADER. Not at all. You've no one else but yourself to blame
For getting yourself involved in such nasty affairs.

STREPSIADES. Why didn't you tell me *that* at an earlier stage?
I'm just an old bumpkin—it's you who urged me on.

LEADER. But that's our usual behaviour, whenever we see
A person who's set his heart on nasty affairs.

We lead him on till we land him in serious trouble, 1460
To make sure he learns to fear the gods in future. [*Turns away.*]

STREPSIADES. That's a really nasty method, you Clouds—but it's
justice as well.

I was wrong to cheat my way out of what I'd borrowed.

[*The CHORUS now moves back to the edge of the orchêstra.*

STREPSIADES *turns to his son.*]

But I beg you now to help me, my dearest child:

Please come with me to destroy vile Chairephon

And Sokrates—the men who deceived us both.

PHEIDIPPIDES. But I'm not prepared to wrong my former
teachers.

STREPSIADES. You must, you must, 'in awe of paternal Zeus'.*

PHEIDIPPIDES. Just listen, 'paternal Zeus'! What a primitive mind!

You believe that Zeus exists? 1470

STREPSIADES. He does!

PHEIDIPPIDES [*smugly*]. He doesn't,

'It's Swirl who's driven Zeus out and is ruling the world.'*

STREPSIADES. No, he *hasn't* driven him out. That's what I thought

Because of this pot over here.* What a wretched fool

To believe as I did that a pot like you was a god!

PHEIDIPPIDES. I'm off. You can stay and babble away insanely.

[*Exits into house.*]

STREPSIADES. What made me go out of my mind? I was simply
crazy

To reject the gods themselves. It was Sokrates' fault.

[*He turns to the herm that stands outside his house door.*]

O Hermes, my friend, don't turn your anger against me,*
 Don't rub me into the dust, please show some mercy:
 It was foolish blather that sent me out of my mind. 1480
 I beg you to give me advice: should I take revenge
 By pursuing a legal charge—or what else do you think?

[*He leans towards the statue as though it were whispering in his ear, then becomes animated.*]

That's good advice: all legal quibbling is pointless,
 Much better to set alight the house that they're in,
 These foolish blatherers here!
 [*Shouting into his house*] Hoy, Xanthias,*
 Come out with a ladder, and bring me a mattock as well.

[*A SLAVE emerges promptly from door A with ladder and mattock; he proceeds to follow STREPSIADES' instructions.*]

Climb up there on the Thinking Institute wall
 And dismantle the roof, if you love this master of yours,
 Until you make their house collapse on their heads.
 And I want a burning torch for myself at once. 1490

[*Another SLAVE rushes out from door A with the requested torch.*]

I'll exact revenge from the lot of them on the spot,
 I'm determined to do it, no matter what bluster they use.

[*The action during the following lines is carried out in symbolic and pantomime-like fashion, not realistically: the first SLAVE dismantles the roof-tiles; STREPSIADES follows him up the ladder, using his torch to 'set fire' to the building and his mattock to help destroy the roof. In the hubbub, various characters appear at windows in the building and/or at door B.*]

STUDENT^A. Help! Help!

STREPSIADES [*gleefully*]. It's up to you, my torch, to create
 a blaze!

STUDENT^A. Hey you, what on earth are you doing?

STREPSIADES. What me? Can't
 you see?

Engaging in subtle debate with the building's roof-beams!

STUDENT^B. What's happening, help! Who's setting our house on fire?

STREPSIADES. It's that fellow whose cloak you stole when I came to the school.*

STUDENT^B. You'll kill us, you'll kill us!

STREPSIADES. Exactly the outcome I'd like,
If this mattock of mine doesn't disappoint all my hopes— 1500
And if I don't fall down first and break my neck!

SOKRATES. Hey you, up there on the roof, what d'you think you're doing?

STREPSIADES. 'Air-walking and spinning my thoughts around the sun.'*

SOKRATES. I'm in desperate trouble, the smoke is making me choke.

STUDENT^B. And I'm in danger of burning to cinders in here!

STREPSIADES. It serves you right for showing the gods contempt
And daring to scrutinize the moon's backside.*

[At this point SOKRATES and other members of the school run out from door B. STREPSIADES and his SLAVE have come down off the roof by now. There is a brief mêlée before all the characters exit running by the two eisodoi.]*

Pursue them, hit them, pelt them—for lots of reasons
But most of all because they wronged the gods.

LEADER. Let's file off now: we've done our full share of dancing for this performance. 1510

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The Explanatory Notes are designed to provide concise guidance on historical and other details which might puzzle a modern reader. Fuller information about most points can be found in the Oxford commentaries cited in the Bibliography. The following abbreviations are occasionally used in the notes:

- DK *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. H. Diels and W. Kranz, 6th edn. (Zurich, 1962)
- IEG *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, ed. M. L. West, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (Oxford, 1989–92)
- OCD⁴ *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, 4th edn. (Oxford, 2012)
- PMG *Poetae Melici Graeci*, ed. D. L. Page (Oxford, 1962)

The fragments of comic and tragic poets are cited, respectively, from the following editions:

- Poetae Comici Graeci*, ed. R. Kassel and C. Austin (Berlin, 1984–)
- Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, ed. B. Snell *et al.* (Göttingen, 1971–2004)

Aristophanes' play titles are abbreviated as follows:

- A. *Acharnians*
- AW *Assembly-Women*
- B. *Birds*
- C. *Clouds*
- F. *Frogs*
- K. *Knights*
- L. *Lysistrata*
- P. *Peace*
- W. *Wasps*
- We. *Wealth*
- WT *Women at the Thesmophoria*

CLOUDS

- 7 *punish my slaves*: there was a higher risk during wartime that (ill-treated) slaves would desert to the enemy; cf. e.g. Thucydides 2.57.1.
- 14 *grow long*: long hair was associated with, among others, the young cavalrymen (n. on 120) of Athens; see K. 580 and cf. n. on 349–50.
- 15 *chariot-racing*: the chariot mentioned here is a two-horse vehicle (*sunoris*); there were races for these in e.g. the Panathenaia festival (see Index of

- Names). Cf. notes on 28, 69, 122 below for other kinds of chariots mentioned in connection with Pheidippides.
- 17 *twentieth*: Athenian months were 29/30 days long; Strepsiades is dreading the latest demands of his creditors at the end of the month.
- 21 *Twelve minas*: a fifth of a talent or 1,200 drachmas; the price of a very good horse (cf. 1224) but a huge amount for most Athenians (skilled workers around this time might be paid a drachma a day). For other prices cf. nn. on 118, *WT* 1195, *F.* 173.
- 23 *dashing*: the Greek specifies a horse branded with a special letter (*koppa*) to show its thoroughbred status; the same term is used in line 438.
- 28 *war-carts*: these were also two-horse chariots (cf. n. on 15) with their own races at the Panathenaia.
- 30 *'What burden . . . ?'*: a phrase adapted from the lyrics of an unknown play by Euripides (fr. 1011). The names Pasiās and Ameinias (cf. 686–92) need not denote real individuals here.
- 32 *rolled clean*: a horse would have its sweat removed after exercise by making it roll on the dusty ground of an enclosure; cf. the metaphor at *F.* 904.
- 35 *seize my goods*: the law sometimes allowed a creditor to seize property (which might have been pledged as security in advance) in lieu of unpaid interest; cf. 241.
- 37 *debt enforcer*: Strepsiades refers to a demarch, a local deme magistrate (cf. n. on 134), who seems to have been responsible, among other things, for enforcing the penalties on certain debt contracts. For the pun on bedbugs, cf. 'being bitten' at 12.
- 41b *matchmaker*: arranged marriages, common in Athenian society, were sometimes negotiated with the help of a female matchmaker.
- 46 *Megakles*: the name was associated with the Alkmaionids, an old but controversial Athenian aristocratic family (see *OCD*⁺ 54) whose recent members included Perikles (see Index of Names) and Alkibiades (n. on *F.* 1423). For the nature of Strepsiades' marriage, see my Introduction to the play. It was standard for respectable Athenian women to be publicly identified by the names of male relatives; cf. e.g. *WT* 605, 619, 840–1.
- 48 *Koisyra*: this name too (cf. 800) was found among the Alkmaionidai; see also *A.* 614.
- 51–2 *she . . . cults*: Strepsiades associates his wife not only with an expensive lifestyle (saffron was used for dyeing dresses: see n. on *WT* 138–9) but also with sexual sensuality and involvement in cults of Aphrodite and other deities (cf. n. on *WT* 130).
- 65 *Pheidonides*: Strepsiades gives a lengthened form to the name Pheidon (see 134), whose etymology means 'sparing', by implication connoting stinginess in Strepsiades' mind. The mother's suggestions all contain the *-(h)ippo* element ('horse') which was a feature of traditionally aristocratic names.

- 69 *Akropolis*: if the imagined context is the cavalcade of the Panathenaia (see Index of Names), as illustrated on the N and S friezes of the Parthenon, then Pheidippides would be driving an *apobates* chariot, i.e. with a hoplite warrior alongside him. But it is uncertain whether such chariots actually ascended the Akropolis during the Panathenaia. Cf. *WT* 811–12.
- 83 *Hippios*: lit. ‘(god) of horses’; for this title of Poseidon’s, cf. *K.* 551.
- 94 *Thinking Institute*: the image of an esoteric community of intellectuals may have been influenced by Pythagoreanism, the only philosophical movement of which this was a feature at this date.
- 97 *charcoal*: the analogy between cosmic phenomena and everyday objects (here a lid heated by being placed over charcoal) is of a kind used by early Greek thinkers; cf. e.g. Anaximenes A7.6 DK on heavenly bodies turning like a felt cap round the head, with Herakleitos A16.130 DK for another analogy with charcoal. See *B.* 1001 for the same baking-lid analogy, which had apparently been made by Hippon of Samos (mid-5th c.), earlier satirized for it in Kratinos fr. 167.
- 104 *Chairephon*: see Index of Names. Pheidippides invokes a stereotype of intellectuals as pale-faced (on account of their supposedly indoor life) and going barefoot (cf. nn. on 362–3, 1167).
- 109 *Leogoras*: a rich Athenian, father of the orator Andokides; his family had various connections with the Alkmaionids (see n. on line 46), but he is mentioned chiefly in comedy for his luxurious lifestyle (pheasants being bred by some aristocrats at this time as an exotic status-symbol). Cf. *W.* 1269.
- 113 *stronger . . . weaker*: Protagoras had boasted he could teach his students how ‘to make the weaker argument into the stronger’ (A21, B6b DK), which in the present play means above all making an *immoral* argument defeat a (conventional) moral position; see 882 ff. and cf. my Introduction to the play.
- 118 *obol*: a sixth of a drachma; for comparative prices cf. n. on 21 with 612, 864, 1235, *WT* 1195, *F.* 140, 173–7, 1236.
- 120 *cavalry men . . . complexion*: the ‘cavalry men’ are the knights (*hippeis*), a class of Athenian citizens who owned their own horses. On Pheidippides’ concern about his complexion, cf. 103.
- 122 *fancy horses*: the reference includes those for four-horse chariots (*tethrippa*), which raced in the Panathenaia and Olympic games. Cf. nn. on lines 15, 28, 69.
- 132 *Hello there!*: for various door-knocking routines in Aristophanes see e.g. *F.* 37 ff., 460 ff., *A.* 395 ff., *B.* 57 ff.
- 134 *Kikynna*: the location of this rural deme (one of the c.140 administrative districts into which Attika was officially divided) is uncertain but probably lay SE of the city beyond Mount Hymettos. For Strepsiades’ father’s name, see 65 with note.
- 137 *aborted*: lit. ‘made to miscarry’. Sokrates uses the same term in connection with his self-image as ‘midwife’ of ideas at Plato, *Theaetetus* 150e. Related

- vocabulary is used of impeded/misguided thought at Empedokles B2.2, 110.7 DK.
- 145 *a flea can jump*: ironically, the mechanics of a flea's jump still interest modern scientists: see <<http://jeb.biologists.org/content/214/5/836.full.pdf+html>>.
- 150 *both its feet*: Aristophanes ignores (or is unaware of) the fact that a flea has six legs.
- 151 *Persian slippers*: a luxurious form of soft female footwear; cf. *WT* 734 (a baby's).
- 156 *Sphettos*: it is unclear why Chairephon's deme (see on line 134) is mentioned at this point; there may be a joke of some sort.
- 179 *stole a cloak*: the abrupt shift from a geometry lesson to an act of theft is an extreme example of a *para prosdokian* ('contrary to expectation') punchline. The joke-form erases any plausible psychology on the Student's part. But the gap between abstract ideas and material life is a telling motif: cf. Eupolis fr. 386 (Sokrates has intellectualized everything—except where to get enough to eat), fr. 395 (Sokrates steals a jug at a symposium), and Aristophanes fr. 691 (Appendix).
- 180 *Thales*: philosopher-scientist of the early 6th cent. (see *OCD*⁺ 1448), a legendary polymath. Strepsiades means, of course, that he is even more impressed by what he has just heard about Sokrates. Cf. *B.* 1009.
- 184 *tableau* [stage direction]: there are various theories about how this scene was staged; one involves use of the wheeled platform, *ekkuklêma* (see the general Introduction, 'Stage Directions', n. 87).
- 186 *Pylos . . . Lakonian*: Spartan troops who had surrendered at Pylos in summer 425 and had been brought back to Athens (Thucydides 4.30–41). Strepsiades is referring to the dishevelled and emaciated appearance of the students.
- 188 *under ground*: this echoes a formula ('things up in the air and under the earth') used to mock the unworldly interests of some intellectuals; see Hippokrates, *Ancient Medicine* 1, Plato, *Apology* 18b, 23d.
- 192 *Erebos . . . Tartaros*: primordial parts of the cosmos (cf. *B.* 693, 698) which had become associated with the underworld's darkest recesses.
- 195 *master*: Sokrates.
- 203 *cleruchies*: a cleruchy was a colony in which parcels of land were allotted to Athenian citizens; see *OCD*⁺ 333–4. Strepsiades' instinct that only practical 'geometry' (lit. 'earth-measuring') is useful matches the view ascribed to Sokrates himself at Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 4.7.2–3.
- 205 *the people at large*: Strepsiades thinks the cleruchy principle (see n. on 203) is being extended to claim the whole world as Athenian land and will accordingly benefit the entire *demos* or citizen body.
- 206 *map*: for the existence of 'world maps' at this time, see Herodotos 4.36, 5.49.

- 208 *jurors*: the Athenians came to think of their elaborate jury-court system, and the possibilities of litigiousness that went with it, as a salient feature of the democracy; in addition to *Wasps*, cf. 863–4, with the jokes at *B*. 40–1, 109, *F*. 1466.
- 210 *Kikynnian*: see 134.
- 211 *Eubolia*: the largest island in the W Aegean, running roughly parallel to the mainland of Greece.
- 213 *laid them out*: the Athenians, with Perikles as general, had quashed a Euboian revolt more than twenty years previously, in 446 (Thucydides 1.114).
- 225 *Air-walking*: an invented verb in the Greek; cf. the famous reference to this passage in Plato, *Apology* 19 c.
- 228 *higher*: lit. ‘up in the air’; cf. n. on 188.
- 233 *moisture of . . . thoughts*: Diogenes of Apollonia (roughly contemporary with Sokrates), who believed mind/soul was itself air (B4 DK; cf. Anaximenes B2 DK for the same view), suggested that moisture could impede thought (A19.44 DK).
- 241 *seizing my goods*: cf. n. on 35.
- 249 *iron coinage*: responding to Sokrates’ metaphorical use of ‘currency’ (cf. *F*. 890), Strepsiades makes a (feeble?) joke about real currency; the Byzantines still used iron coins, where cities like Athens used (mostly) silver (see n. on *F*. 720–6). The whole passage may have a subtext: coins as bearers of images of the gods.
- 254 *holy couch*: but the reality is probably a cheap bed of some sort; cf. 633.
- 257 *Athamas*: a Boiotian king who found himself facing sacrifice as an expiatory victim but was rescued at the last minute; there is probably an allusion to a scene in a lost play by Sophokles where Athamas stood at an altar wearing a wreath. One of Athamas’s wives was the goddess Nephele, ‘Cloud’, which may have added a tacit resonance to the humour!
- 260 *floury*: Sokrates uses a term meaning lit. ‘fine flour’ and metaphorically ‘a subtle speaker’; the sprinkling of flour over Strepsiades is a sort of parodic ritual (sacrificial animals usually had grain thrown at them).
- 264 *earth up high*: Sokrates’ words imply the view that the earth is held in its cosmic position by the surrounding air; for similar views see e.g. Anaximenes A20 DK. Diogenes of Apollonia (n. on 233) thought air was in some sense ‘god’ (B5 DK). Aither: see Index of Names. For ‘measureless’, cf. n. on 393.
- 270–4 *If now . . . heed our prayer*: Sokrates uses a traditional Greek prayer form, invoking the deity to come from its current abode and promising it continued worship; cf. n. on *WT* 319. In traditional Greek mythology, Ocean was a primordial river-god (Hesiod, *Theogony* 20, 133, etc.) often imagined as encircling the earth; the gardens are probably those of the Hesperides (Hesiod, *ibid.* 215–16). The Maiotian lake is the modern sea of Azov (NE of the Black Sea); Mount Mimas is on a headland in W Asia Minor.

- 275 *on the roof*: i.e. to be imagined as in the sky. Most scholars think the Chorus sang from entirely out of sight (until 323 ff.), but this poses acoustic problems for the audibility of their lyrics. Cf. the birds on the *skênê* roof at *B.* 267–93 and see the general Introduction, ‘Formality and Performance’.
- 278 *father Ocean*: see 271.
- 300–1 *Pallas* . . . *Kekrops*: two periphrases for Athens/Attika. For Pallas see Index of Names; Kekrops was a mythical early king of Athens.
- 302–4 *awe* . . . *ritual acts*: a reference to the Eleusinian Mysteries (see Index of Names).
- 311–13 *spring* . . . *pipes*: a reference to the Great Dionysia festival, the most important of the Athenian dramatic festivals and the one at which the first version of *Clouds* itself was performed. See general Introduction, ‘Aristophanes’ Career in Context’.
- 323 *Parnes*: a large mountain range at the NW edge of Attika.
- 326 *entrance*: the Greek term *eisodos* denotes one of the side entrances to the *orchêstra*; see general Introduction, ‘Stage Directions’. This is therefore a metatheatrical moment.
- 331–4 *clever* . . . *Muses*: Sokrates (in a voice which ironically undercuts his own supposed religion) lumps together all sorts of figures who might be cynically thought of as vapidly ‘cloudy’ in their pretentiousness (or, in their own terms, inspired by the Muses: see Index of Names).
- 335–9 *they wrote* . . . *wolfed down*: Strepsiades quotes snippets of ‘airy’ phraseology from dithyramb (a genre of choral song in honour of Dionysos) and pictures the poets being rewarded (by patrons) with lavish banquets. The giant Typhos (Typhoios) is the origin of winds at Hesiod, *Theogony* 869.
- 349–50 *Xenophantos* . . . *centaurs*: the target is Hieronymos, a dithyrambic poet (cf. n. on 335–9) and exceptionally hairy (cf. n. on 14), apparently the same person as at *A.* 388–9; there *may* be innuendo of pederastic behaviour in the present gibe. For centaurs, see Index of Names.
- 351 *Simon*: a contemporary politician and probably the same person as at 399.
- 353 *Kleonymos*: see Index of Names.
- 355 *Kleisthenes*: see Index of Names.
- 358 *CHORUS*: the context justifies chanting by the whole chorus at this point, though in dialogue scenes like this the chorus-leader alone normally speaks (as I assume from 412 onwards).
- 361 *Prodikos*: a contemporary polymathic intellectual or ‘sophist’ (see e.g. Plato, *Protagoras* 314–17); see n. on 659 and cf. fr. 506 (Appendix), *B.* 692.
- 362–3 *swaggering walk* . . . *face*: Alkibiades confirms this description at Plato, *Symposium* 221b. Sokrates’ eyes were exceptionally protruding: see Xenophon, *Symposium* 5.5, Plato, *Theaetetus* 143e, 209c. His physiognomy and deportment were perceived by some as arrogant: see e.g.

- Ameipsias fr. 9.3, Plato, *Symposium* 220c, Xenophon, *Symposium* 5.6. For his barefoot habit (cf. 103) see e.g. Plato, *Symposium* 220b, Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.6.2.
- 364 *Earth*: in early Greek mythology, the primordial wife of Ouranos (Sky); see Hesiod, *Theogony* 20, 45, etc.
- 373 *Zeus . . . sieve*: most Greeks did not take literally Zeus's traditional image as a rain-god (cf. *F.* 246); Strepsiades embodies ludicrous naivety.
- 380 *swirl*: several early Greek thinkers, including Empedokles (e.g. B35.4, 115.11 DK), posited a kind of cosmic vortex to explain processes of material change on the largest scale. The Greek word *dinos* used here can also mean a large wine mixing-bowl: a specimen of the latter stands outside the door of Sokrates' school (see n. on 1473).
- 385 *Panathenaia*: see Index of Names.
- 393 *endless*: Sokrates echoes the vocabulary of those Greek philosophers, starting with Anaximander in the 6th century, who took physical reality to be in some sense without limits, even 'infinite'; cf. 264.
- 394 *sounds themselves*: Sokrates actually says 'the words themselves', i.e. *brontê* (thunder) and *pardê* (fart), which have some phonological resemblance in Greek.
- 398 *Kronos*: see Index of Names.
- 399–400 *Simon . . . Theoros*: Simon (cf. 351), Kleonymos (see Index of Names), and Theoros (e.g. *A.* 134 ff., *W.* 42–51, 1220–42) were all minor politicians, the second and third associated with the leading demagogue Kleon (see 549, 586 ff.).
- 401 *Sounion*: the southernmost tip of Attika (cf. *B.* 868); Sokrates quotes a phrase from Homer, *Odyssey* 3.278. We do not know whether the first half of the line refers to a specific lightning strike on a temple of Zeus.
- 404–7 *dry wind . . . ignites*: the explanation is in the tradition of Ionian natural science; cf. esp. Anaximander A23 DK.
- 408 *Diasia*: a winter festival of Zeus Meilichios; see 864 and cf. Thucydides 1.126.6.
- 424 *Chaos*: originally the primeval void from which all reality came into being (cf. *B.* 693); but here as at 627 Sokrates associates it with the infinite air above (cf. 393). For Tongue as a pseudo-deity, cf. *F.* 892.
- 438 *thoroughbred*: see n. on 23.
- 451 *lip-smacking creep*: we do not know the exact meaning of this last term nor the precise slang sense of several other words in the preceding list.
- 475 *seek your advice*: the chorus picture Strepsiades as a legal consultant in great demand.
- 478–80 *disclose . . . defences*: this may evoke a distinctively Sokratic interest (seen in both Plato and Xenophon) in getting 'inside' individuals' ways of thinking; the theme is developed further at 695 ff.

- 494–6 *blows . . . charge*: for a scenario of this kind, with roles reversed, see lines 1297–1302, and cf. e.g. *W.* 1331–3.
- 499 *stolen goods*: in certain circumstances Athenian law permitted someone to enter another's house in search of stolen property, but the searcher was required to remove their clothing so as not to be able to 'plant' something.
- 503 *Chairephon*: see Index of Names.
- 507–8 *cake . . . cave*: visitors to the cave oracle of Trophonios in Boiotia took a honey-cake to placate the snakes believed to live in the cave.
- 518–19 *Spectators . . . Dionysos*: it soon becomes apparent that the chorus-leader is speaking (notionally) in the voice of the playwright, with Dionysos invoked as god of theatre/comedy. On the metre of this passage (eupolideans), cf. the general Introduction, 'Translating Aristophanes'.
- 524 *defeated*: the reference is to the first staging of *Clouds*, in 423; see my Introduction to the play.
- 528–32 *Ever since . . . so proudly*: a reference to Aristophanes' first play, *Banqueters* (427), which included a pair of brothers with sharply contrasting characters and values; see the Appendix, s.v. *Daitales*. The play was produced by Kallistratos or Philonides, hence the humorous trope of the unmarried girl who could not bring up her own baby: see the general Introduction, 'Aristophanes' Career in Context'.
- 534–6 *Elektra . . . hair*: the simile is loosely based on the story of Elektra living in hope of the return of her exiled brother Orestes, after the murder of Agamemnon by Klytaimnestra, and finding a lock of Orestes' hair on their father's tomb (cf. Aischylos, *Choephoroi*, esp. 166–211).
- 538–9 *leather . . . laugh*: i.e. the phallus often/standardly worn by comic actors but sometimes 'tied up' rather than left dangling. The ostensible disdain for blatant phallic humour is not a sincere Aristophanic attitude: see e.g. *WT* 236–48, 643–8.
- 543 *torches*: comically disingenuous in the light of 1490 ff.; see my Introduction to the play.
- 549–50 *struck him . . . flat*: the reference, cast in a metaphor from all-in-wrestling (*pankration*), is to the comic assault on Kleon (see Index of Names) in *Knights* (424). Cf. n. on 1047.
- 551–2 *Hyperbolos*: see Index of Names.
- 553–7 *Eupolis . . . Hermippos*: Eupolis, one of Aristophanes' main rivals, staged *Marikas* (a satirical sobriquet, of uncertain origin, for Hyperbolos) at Lenaia 421. Phrynichos, a somewhat older comic poet (cf. *F.* 13), had written a comedy in which Andromeda was threatened by a sea-monster (cf. n. on *WT* 1012). Hermippos's *Bread-Sellers* apparently contained a role for Hyperbolos's mother (cf. *WT* 840–5). There was also a *Hyperbolos* by Plato comicus.
- 559 *eel-fishing*: apparently a reference to *K.* 864–7, though we do not know which poet(s) had supposedly copied the image.

- 566 *trident's keeper*: Poseidon (see Index of Names).
- 571 *charioteer*: a traditional image of the sun (e.g. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 88–9).
- 580 *let you know*: adverse weather might be interpreted as an omen of divine displeasure; cf. n. on 581–3.
- 581–3 *tanner . . . thunder cracked*: the politician Kleon (allegorized as a Paphlagonian tanner in Aristophanes' *Knights*: cf. n. on 549) was elected general for 424–3, but the elections were initially postponed on account of meteorological omens (including a solar eclipse, 21 March 424). The quotation in 583 is from Sophokles' lost play *Teucer*, fr. 578.
- 591–2 *cormorant . . . stocks*: Kleon had already been called a cormorant at *K.* 956. Stocks or pillories, sometimes fastening just the neck (cf. *L.* 680–1, *We.* 476, 606) and sometimes the arms and legs as well (*K.* 1049; cf. n. on *WT* 931 for a particularly brutal form), were used to imprison/punish certain (low-grade) criminals.
- 596 *Kynthos*: the highest point on the island of Delos, birthplace of Apollo (Index of Names).
- 598 *deity*: Artemis (see Index of Names); her great 6th-century temple at Ephesos had benefited from Lydian contributions (Herodotos 1.92.1) and served the religious needs of both peoples.
- 602 *aegis*: traditionally a garment (often a snake-fringed cape) worn by Athena (see Index of Names), here treated, by an extravagant metaphor, as though it were a means of transport.
- 616 *confusion*: the Athenians used a calendar of twelve lunar months (cf. 1191) for their festival year, but had to make periodic intercalations to prevent major deviation from the solar year.
- 620 *trials*: Athenian courts (and other state institutions) were traditionally closed during religious festivals; cf. *WT* 78–80. On the torture of slaves for judicial purposes, see n. on *F.* 616.
- 622 *Memnon or Sarpedon*: non-Greek heroes with divine parents and both killed at Troy; the first (cf. *F.* 963) a Lykian, son of the goddess Dawn and killed by Achilles, the second an Aithiopian, son of Zeus and unforgettably mourned by his own father with tears of blood at Homer, *Iliad* 16.458–61.
- 623–6 *Hyperbolos . . . days of life*: Hyperbolos (see 551–8) had been elected Athens' sacred ambassador to the Delphic Amphictyony, but seems to have had an embarrassing experience on a ceremonial occasion; the passage may also imply he had been involved in official adjustments to the city's calendar (n. on 616).
- 627 *Chaos . . . Air*: see nn. on 264, 424. 'Respiration' is uniquely deified here, but in keeping with Sokrates' general emphasis on 'airy' gods.
- 638 *rhythms*: technical classification of metrical rhythms was an interest of several contemporary thinkers, including Damon (n. on 651) and Hippias (Plato, *Hippias Major* 285d).

- 642 *verses*: Sokrates' technical terms (trimeters and tetrameters: cf. the general Introduction, 'Translating Aristophanes') must have been familiar to anyone educated in or appreciative of poetry, especially drama (and therefore, practically by definition, the spectators of *Clouds* itself). Strepsiades thinks only of the measures in which grain was sold: his references are to a *medimnos* ('bushel') and the eight sub-units into which it was divided.
- 651 '*military beat*' . . . '*bending finger*': enoplian and dactyl (*daktulos*, lit. 'finger'). Both terms were recent metrical coinages by the musical theorist Damon (see Plato, *Republic* 3.400b), though we cannot be sure exactly which metres he designated by them.
- 653 *like this*: presumably an obscene gesture with the middle finger; related gestures are involved at *A.* 444, *K.* 1381, *P.* 549.
- 659 *rightly* . . . *gender*: an allusion to new ideas of systematic grammar, especially concepts of 'correct language' held by the likes of Protagoras (*A*24, *A*26–8 DK) and Prodikos (Plato, *Euthydemus* 277e). Cf. n. on *F.* 1181.
- 664 *for both*: the Greek *alektruôn* originally meant 'cock', but had become used also for the hen of the domestic fowl.
- 667 *Air*: cf. 627.
- 673 *Kleonymos*: see Index of Names.
- 676 *used himself*: lit. 'kneaded (himself) in a round mortar'. Evidently a sexual joke, though we do not know whether masturbation or anal sex is the point of the slang.
- 690 *Ameinia*: the vocative form of this name (cf. 31) lacks the final -s, producing an ending which coincides with that of some female names (e.g. Demetria, 684).
- 692 *military service*: a figure called Ameinias (or Amunias) was the butt of various jokes in this period (e.g. *W.* 74, 466, 1267); but we cannot be sure how precisely targeted this gibe is.
- 695 *think very deeply*: what follows parodies an exercise in intensive self-scrutiny and problem-solving which may well evoke the distinctive intellectual style of the historical Sokrates (roughly speaking, his preoccupation with 'the examined life': see Plato, *Apology* 38a); cf. n. on 478–80.
- 708 *ails you*: in the course of this exchange between chorus and character there are several parodic overtones of scenes of tragic suffering.
- 710 *Korinthian*: in Greek there is a phonetic pun (*koreis*, bedbugs, having the same first syllable as *Korinthioi*); the Corinthians were allies of Sparta and therefore on the enemy side in the Peloponnesian war at the time of the first production of *Clouds* in 423.
- 719 *shoes*: while inside Sokrates' school between 510 and 635, Strepsiades had been stripped of most of his clothes (cf. 497–500).
- 731 *Right then* . . . : the odd relationship of this line to 723 ff. may be the result of the incomplete revision of the play; an alternative is to take Sokrates off stage briefly between 726 and 731.

- 749 *sorceress*: the Greek world knew many women who practised assorted magic. ‘Drawing down the moon’ (cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 513a) seems to have been metaphorical for causing an eclipse, but Strepsiades has naively superstitious belief in the literal act.
- 758 *five talents*: an enormous sum of money; n. on 21.
- 763 *beetle*: in a children’s game, a cockchafer’s leg was tied to a piece of thread; the beetle was then released into the air.
- 768 *glass*: a rare commodity in classical Athens, here used as a burning-lens; cf. the glass vessels at *A.* 74.
- 772 *melt*: Strepsiades envisages a charge written on a wax tablet (cf. Strepsiades’ own tablet at 19 ff.).
- 789 *crows*: more strictly, ‘ravens’; for this colloquial curse (also in the Greek at 123, 133, 646, 871), see *WT* 1079, *F.* 187–9, and cf. *B.* 28 (with a situational pun).
- 800 *Koisyra-like*: see n. on 48.
- 804 *Antistrophe*: the antistrophe is longer than the strophe at 700–6, an irregularity which may reflect the incomplete revision of the play.
- 814 *Mist*: following his earlier experience in the School, Strepsiades is now inventing his *own* meteorological deities; but cf. 330.
- 815 *Megakles*: see 124 with n. on 46; ‘colonnades’ conjures up the image of a grand house.
- 827 *Swirl*: cf. 380–1.
- 830 *Melos*: island in the SW Aegean; Strepsiades confuses Sokrates with Diogenes the Melian (see *B.* 1073–4), a contemporary thinker with a scandalous reputation for challenging traditional religious beliefs.
- 831 *fleas’ feet*: see 144–52.
- 837 *baths*: cf. 1044–54.
- 842 *know yourself*: an echo of the famous injunction on Apollo’s temple at Delphi; see e.g. Plato, *Protagoras* 343b.
- 845 *court order*: Athenian legal procedure allowed a son to have control of family affairs transferred to him on the grounds of his father’s dementia.
- 856 *lost your cloak*: see 497–505 with stage direction before 634.
- 859 *‘special reasons’*: Plutarch, *Perikles* 23.1 records that Perikles used such a disingenuous phrase in his accounts as general in 445 to cover a large sum of money spent on a bribe to the Spartans.
- 864 *Diasia*: see n. on 408. Athenian jurors were paid on a daily basis: 3 obols (n. on 118) by this date (see esp. *W.* 684). Cf. n. on 208.
- 876 *Hyperbolos*: see Index of Names; Sokrates implies he had been a stupid pupil of forensic rhetoric and had needed hugely expensive teaching (for the value of a talent see nn. on 21, 758).
- 888/9 [*stage direction*]: the original version of *Clouds* would at this point have

had a choral ode (during which the actor playing Sokrates would have changed into the costume of either Moral or Immoral). The evidence suggests it was cut but not replaced by Aristophanes in the unfinished revision of the play.

- 902 *Justice*: Dike is a deity, or at least a divine personification, in some Greek texts, the earliest being Hesiod, *Theogony* 902, *Works and Days* 256–62.
- 905 *father*: Kronos (see Index of Names). The argument is of a kind already used at Aischylos, *Eumenides* 640–2.
- 922–4 *Telephos . . . Pandeletos*: on Telephos, see the Index of Names. Pandeletos, mentioned also by Kratinos (fr. 260), is unknown: the name was probably proverbial.
- 964 *music lessons*: from a *kitharistês*, who taught boys poetry and music; cf. *K.* 992 and e.g. Plato, *Protagoras* 326a–b.
- 966 *fooling around*: the Greek refers to a boys' game of squeezing the thighs together, while seated, so as to make the penis protrude.
- 967 '*Pallas . . . lyre*': openings/portions of two songs (i.e. lyric poems), both of uncertain authorship but implicitly representative of rather old-fashioned types; for Pallas see Index of Names.
- 971 [no line 970 in modern editions] *Phrynis*: a mid-5th-century professional performer who became known for use of a certain kind of modulation in his musical practices.
- 973 *wrestling*: a traditional element in athletic education, at least for those wealthy enough to afford it; cf. *F.* 729.
- 984–5 *Dipolieia . . . rites*: the Dipolieia was a summer festival of Zeus held on the Akropolis; a special ox-slaying ritual (Bouphonia) formed part of it. Cicada hair-brooches are mentioned as outmoded by Thucydides 1.6.3; cf. *K.* 1331. Kekeides was a dithyrambic poet (cf. n. on 335–9) of uncertain date.
- 986 *Marathon-fighters*: the generation of those who fought in the battle of Marathon (see Index of Names) became a byword for patriotic heroism.
- 988–9 *Panathenaia . . . Tritogeneia*: on the Panathenaia, see Index of Names; Tritogeneia is a very old title (e.g. Hesiod, *Theogony* 895) of Athena.
- 997 *apple*: throwing an apple is here a flirtatious gesture; the kind of dancing-girl envisaged is assumed to be also a prostitute (cf. *F.* 514–20, *A.* 1093).
- 1001 *Hippokrates*: probably the nephew of Perikles who served as general and died at the battle of Delion in 424 (Thucydides 4.101.2); his three sons were mocked by several comic poets for being simpletons (see fr. 1116, Appendix). Cf. *WT* 273.
- 1005 *Academy*: a gymnasium/park to the NW of the city, later to become the location of Plato's philosophical school.
- 1019 *decree*: symbolizing engagement in the politics of the Assembly (see Index of Names).

- 1022–3 *Antimachos* . . . *arsehole*: we do not know whether Antimachos is the same man as at *A.* 1050. For the abusive sexual language, cf. 529, 909, 1083 ff.
- 1047 *in my grip*: as quite often in Aristophanes, the imagery is drawn from wrestling; similarly 126 and e.g. *F.* 878. Cf. n. on 549.
- 1051 *baths* . . . *Herakles*: hot springs, at least such as those at Thermopylai (Herodotos 7.176.3), were associated with Herakles (see Index of Names). ‘Cold baths’ could obviously be thought of as old-fashioned or primitive; the hot-water supply of public baths was a ‘modern’ urban amenity (cf. 837).
- 1055 *Agora*: see Index of Names.
- 1057 *agora-speaker*: Nestor is *agorêtês* (in Homeric Greek, ‘assembly speaker’) at *Iliad* 1.248, 4.293; the same term is used of e.g. Trojan elders, *Iliad* 3.150, and Peleus, 7.126.
- 1063 *knife*: Peleus (father of Achilles) virtuously resisted seduction by Hippolyte, who then falsely accused him. Hippolyte’s husband, Akastos, left Peleus defenceless in the wild but the gods arranged for him to have a knife to protect himself.
- 1065 *Hyperbolos*: see Index of Names.
- 1067–9 *Thetis* . . . *bed*: Thetis, a sea-nymph, could never have lived in a normal ménage with a mortal; but Immoral represents her as abandoning Peleus, after they had produced their son Achilles, on grounds of sexual dissatisfaction.
- 1083 *radish and ashes*: an adulterer caught in the act could be physically abused by the wronged husband; having a radish forced up his anus and his pubic regions singed with hot ashes (cf. *WT* 537–8) are vivid examples of what might be done sadistically.
- 1085 *And suppose* . . . : the lines shorten here from iambic tetrameters to iambic trimeters, with a further shortening to dimeters at 1089 ff. (and some variations of length thereafter).
- 1131–4 *fifth* . . . *last*: the last ten days of the month were counted in reverse; the very last was known as ‘old-and-new’. Cf. 1178–1200.
- 1149 *the one*: i.e. Immoral.
- 1150 *queen*: Strepsiades improvises a goddess of fraud (cf. 729), also using a term which echoes his address to the Clouds at 357.
- 1160 *tongue* . . . *sword*: cf. 1108–10.
- 1167 *emaciated*: the following scene suggests that Pheidippides appears in a different mask from previously, one which highlights his new ascetic look (cf. n. on 104).
- 1176 *Attic expression*: see Index of Names, s.v. Attika.
- 1179 *one day*: see n. on 1131–4.
- 1181 *deposit*: a plaintiff had to make a monetary deposit with a magistrate in order to institute proceedings leading to a court-case.

- 1187 *Solon*: Solon (c.640–560), the greatest statesman of archaic Athens, was popularly credited with being the city's first lawgiver (cf. *B.* 1660) and with having laid the foundations for 'democracy'.
- 1191 *moon*: the Athenian calendar was divided into twelve lunar months; cf. n. on 616.
- 1198 *tasters*: it seems that these were people who officially sampled food the day before certain festivals.
- 1209 *demesmen*: members of the same deme (cf. n. on 134).
- 1224–5 *minas* . . . *horse*: we are reminded of what Strepsiades said at 21–2.
- 1233 *gods*: an ironic echo of 246–7.
- 1235 *obols*: cf. n. on 118.
- 1237 *salt*: hides were rubbed with salt prior to tanning; 1238 shows what Strepsiades has in mind.
- 1251 *grammar*: Strepsiades is using the idea that Sokrates used with *him* at 669–80; 'one obol', cf. n. on 118.
- 1256 *deposit*: see n. on 1181.
- 1261 *Karkinos*: a tragic poet whose career had started more than two decades earlier; with his three sons, including Xenokles (see Index of Names), he is also the butt of jokes at *W.* 1499–1537, *P.* 781–95, 864, *WT* 440.
- 1264–6 *Harsh* . . . *Tlempolemos*: a parody of a tragic passage, possibly by Xenokles (n. on 1261). Tle(m)polemos was a son of Herakles (e.g. Homer, *Iliad* 2.653–70): it is possible that the tragedy alluded to here involved a chariot-crash (compare Sophokles, *Elektra* 698–756).
- 1300 *trace-horse*: one of the two outer horses of a four-horse chariot.
- 1327–30 *father-beater* . . . *roses*: compare 910–12; Pheidippides has learnt to model himself on Immoral's insouciant shamelessness.
- 1337 *stronger* . . . *weaker*: see n. on 113, with 882 ff. Strictly speaking, 1334 has already committed Pheidippides to taking the 'weaker', i.e. immoral, side of the argument.
- 1352 *chorus*: this kind of (extra-dramatic) self-reference by the chorus is more familiar in the parabasis; see 1115.
- 1354 *feasted* . . . *the way*: Strepsiades refers to a dinner of the kind that was followed traditionally by drinking and singing of songs.
- 1356 *Simonides*: a famous lyric poet (c.556–468). The song referred to (*PMG* 507) was a victory-song for a wrestler who had defeated an opponent called Krios, a name whose literal sense is 'ram'. Cf. *B.* 918–19.
- 1360 *cicadas*: these insects were proverbial 'singers'; cf. *B.* 39–40 and the famous story about them told by Sokrates at Plato, *Phaedrus* 258e–9d.
- 1364 *myrtle*: it was a sympotic custom sometimes to hold a myrtle-branch when singing; cf. fr. 444 (translated in the Appendix).
- 1367 *noisy ranting* . . . : very much the view of Aischylos taken by Euripides in the contest in *Frogs*; see my Introduction to that play.

- 1372 *brother . . . sister*: in Euripides' *Aiolos* Makareus committed incest with his sister Kanake; both characters ended up committing suicide. Cf. *F.* 1081, 1475, *P.* 114–19, with my Appendix on Aristophanes' *Aiolosikon*.
- 1378 *cleverest*: see my Introduction to *Frogs*.
- 1415 *the children . . .*: a perverted echo of Euripides, *Alkestis* 691, which is quoted in its proper form at *WT* 194 (see n. there).
- 1435 *you in turn*: Strepsiades is apparently preparing to make the point that any son of Pheidippides, according to the latter's new law, will *also* be entitled to hit his own father.
- 1450 *criminals' pit*: the pit, just outside the city walls and under the control of a public official, into which the corpses of executed criminals were thrown; cf. *F.* 574. There is a memorable image of the place in Plato, *Republic* 4.439e–40a.
- 1468 *'paternal Zeus'*: Strepsiades quotes a phrase that probably comes from tragedy; 'paternal' might alternatively be translated 'ancestral', but the point here is the implication that Zeus will support the demands of a father.
- 1471 *'It's Swirl . . .'*: Pheidippides quotes back line 828 at his father.
- 1473 *this pot*: a large wine mixing-bowl called a *dinos* has stood throughout outside the door of Sokrates' school; cf. n. on 380. The term *dinos* allows puns in Greek on Zeus's name (in oblique cases starting *Di-*).
- 1478 *Hermes*: a herm, i.e. a symbolic (and probably priapic) statue of Hermes, stands outside Strepsiades' house door. Cf. the reference at *L.* 1094 to the notorious scandal of the mutilation of many Athenian herms in 415 (Thucydides 6.27–9).
- 1485 *Xanthias*: a common slave-name (lit. 'blonde-haired') in Aristophanes; cf. Dionysos's slave in *F.*
- 1498 *cloak*: see 497–505 with stage direction before 634; cf. 856.
- 1503 *'Air-walking . . .'*: Strepsiades quotes back line 225 at Sokrates; see the n. there.
- 1507 *backside*: the noun can denote the position of a heavenly body but one of its other meanings is that of a person's bottom; cf. *WT* 133.
- 1507–8 *exit running*: some modern scholars talk about Sokrates and his pupils being 'burned to death' inside the school; but the text clearly indicates that they escape from the building and are chased off stage. See my Introduction to the play.